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IN

GOD'S COUNTRY



By
DORA HIGBEE

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IN
"GOD'S COUNTRY"

A ❁ ❁ ❁
Southern
Romance

by
DORA ❁
HIGBEE.

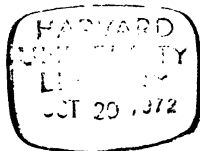
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PREFATORY NOTE.

THIS tragic story of "the dark and bloody ground" made a deep impression when it appeared as a completed novelette in *Belford's Magazine*; and, in its present form, it is believed that it will receive, as it deserves to receive, a wider and more serious attention than is commonly bestowed upon our ever-multiplying stock of literary effusions.

It is a romance of Kentucky, racy of the soil, redolent of the barn-yard and the stable, rich with the tints of bluegrass in the landscape, yet so subtile in structure, and so filled with the spirit of tragedy, as to rise above the latter-day common-

place of our uninspired life into the atmosphere of the idyllic, and to be at one and the same time a current chronicle, an antique and a classic.

What but the vision of true genius could see success in a task so original and daring as the creation of a throbbing heart-interest out of materials so simple, so slight, and so trite? and whose but the hand of an artist could have given to this task execution so powerful and brilliant?

"In 'God's Country'" is the plain and circumstantial narrative of a woman's struggle with that great passion which has wrecked and brightened so many lives. It is the old, old story of love and pride. There are but four characters: a country girl, of the average sort; her father, a country gentleman of the average sort; a horsey lover, of the average sort; and a

tramp, very far indeed from the average sort. The plot-interest turns upon the development of the heart-interest. There is no striving here for effect. The lights and shadows are furnished by the idiosyncrasies of a situation purely local and natural. Into the tranquil existence of a well-bred but motherless girl, living alone with her father, and the head of his establishment, and betrothed, as a kind of matter-of-course, to a young man with whom she has grown to womanhood—her own and her father's choice—there comes a spell against which she is wholly unable to contend, and beneath whose enchanting death-strokes she ultimately falls.

It is difficult to conceive how the sore travail of Lydia Ransome could have had any other ending. It is the misfortune of women in positions such as hers—the not

uncommon position of an internal battle between conflicting sentiments of honor, duty, and affection—that, unequal in point of intellectual strength to meet the incessant drain upon their nervous energies, and to think clearly, they are also unsupported by the wisdom of worldly experience, and are dashed upon the rocks of conventional usage—often irrelevant to the actual issue involved—by the waves of their own emotion, which, unlike the tides of the ocean, are controlled by no law except that which superstition and passion make unto themselves. A wicked woman in Lydia's place would have known precisely what to do. A good woman, with a sufficiency of moral courage and knowledge of life, would have been equally sure of her course. But there is a woman between the two, not bad enough to be a

schemer, not strong enough to be a heroine—truly feminine and lovely—who, when left alone upon the sea of human passion, is as a frail boat tossed by every wind. Of this type was Lydia Ransome; having a noble, aspiring nature; perceptions and susceptibilities divinely born; of ready personal courage and social tact; but half-made upon the spiritual side, and a slave to the abridgments and prejudices of the provincial code under which her lot had been cast. There was nothing for it but anguish, despair, and death. She could not rise high enough, nor sink low enough, to escape. How she fell, like a martyr, if not like a heroine, is told with a power rare to modern fiction; and the lesson that issues thence, sweet as the flowers that sprang from her grave, is full of a woman's appeal and protest against the

limitations with which custom hedges her about, whilst giving the man remission and license.

Of the male characters little need be said. Colonel Ransome, the father, is a good type of the country gentleman of Central Kentucky, well-drawn and not exaggerated. Horrible as the final catastrophe is, it is possible. The two other males, the horsy lover and the weird tramp, are mere shadows; the identity of the tramp arousing the suspicion of the reader from the opening episode of Schubert's Serenade, and entirely revealing itself in that superb dramatic climax, which makes a new world for Lydia, and fills it with the music of the spheres. The closing chapters are breezy with action and of breathless interest; and the finale is reached with the abrupt force of intense

feeling, but without the sacrifice of artistic finish.

I venture to say thus much of this story because of its merits, intrinsically considered, and because of the promise it gives of a new and original presence in a field where, at its best, mere photography seems to have taken the place of the pencil and the pen, and cultivated mediocrity rules supreme. "In 'God's Country,'" is a bucket out of the well of human passion, sympathy, and love, from which Georges Sand and George Eliot brought forth such copious draughts, giving us assurance that the waters there have not gone dry. Let us hope that, in the personality of "D. Higbee," this assurance will be fully realized.

HENRY WATTERSON.

Courier-Journal of Jan. 3, 1890.

IN "GOD'S COUNTRY."

I.

It was an afternoon in early spring, sunny and soft, but a trifle cool in the shade. The air was heavy with the odor of locust-blooms that met in a long, snowy arch over the smooth, white turnpike, and the grassy margin on either side the highway was dotted with wild violets, blue and white. The road traversed the region known as Central Kentucky, and on each side of it, now level, now rolling, stretched the fertile uplands of the "Bluegrass." In every direction the eye encountered an

attenuated line of darker green that marked the capricious winding and doubling of the Elkhorn, which spread itself over the landscape like loops of a tangled skein.

Along this flowery, fragrant highway a man walked slowly, wearily. He wore a wide-brimmed slouch hat that almost concealed his face, and carried a queer knapsack strapped upon his back, which, like the rest of his belongings, was thickly coated with the fine white dust of the "pike." His clothes were not so new, nor so exact in their correspondence to the length and breadth of his figure as they might have been. He was tall and would have seemed slender but for the bagging superfluity of his garments, and he carried himself with an easy grace that refused to yield to the conspiracy of fatigue and

uncouth attire. In a buttonhole of his dilapidated coat was a bunch of violets gathered from the roadside, and in his hand a blooming branch of locust that trailed a faint, sweet odor as he went.

It was four o'clock in the afternoon when he stopped in front of a wide, lime-washed farm gate that opened into a broad avenue, at the other end of which a cluster of chimneys, rising out of a grove of maples, indicated a dwelling of some sort. He turned in at the gate and followed the carriage-drive toward the house. The sward was starred with golden dandelions; above him the maples, not yet in leaf, swung their pale yellow tassels, throwing frail, web-like shadows over the tender green of the young bluegrass; to right and left of him lay fertile reaches of pasture, broad fields of freshly turned earth, acres

of newly springing cereals in varying shades of green ;—a landscape in the unobtrusive tints of a water-color, domed with a sweep of grayish-blue sky and flooded with the pale, tremulous light of an April sun.

The soft green of the young grass, the furrowed fields of rich, brown loam whose clean, earthy smell was borne to him by the breeze, presented a soothing contrast to the glare of the hard, white road. His eyes dwelt lingeringly upon the prospect ; he breathed deeply the fresh air, with its stimulating aroma of ploughed land, and removed his hat that he might feel the cool wind upon his head as he walked leisurely toward the house. As he drew near, the structure became more distinct in outline. It was a square, old-fashioned house with a hall running through the middle. and a

porch in front, like all the other dwellings he had passed during the day. Clustered about it were the innumerable outbuildings that give every Kentucky farm the appearance of a populous village. There was the long, low line of lime-washed log cabins, with its group of ebony figures in front. To the left gleamed the white walls of the training stable, also with its sprawling group around the door. Between the stable and the house there was a glimpse of smooth water, where the fish-pond lay, edged with a golden fringe of willows still bare of foliage. Beyond rose the grassy undulations of the orchard, whose green billows were capped with foamy crests of apple-bloom that leapt and danced in the brisk, strong wind.

Presently he could distinguish a moving object upon the lawn and a vivid point of

color glinting through the shrubbery. A hammock with a feminine occupant developed gradually against the green background; the point of color became a scarlet shawl; and the steadily diminishing perspective brought out such minor details as a slender, slippered foot, tapping the ground now and then to keep the hammock in motion, and a cascade of lace-edged ruffles escaping to view through a negligent arrangement of drapery.

He walked to within a few feet of the hammock and stood watching its burden across the top of a spreading syringa that screened him from view. For a moment he forgot his hunger and his weariness in the contemplation of the most delicious incarnation of idle revery his imagination could picture. Though her eyes were closed; she was not asleep, for the foot

kept tapping the sword; and over the edge of the hammock and down upon the grass streamed a flowing abundance of red gold hair, damp and clinging, that caught and held the light like amber.

He was loath to disturb her, for he was sure no other pose could be so perfectly, so unconsciously picturesque; but he was very hungry, and the urging of the material man began at last to blunt the artistic sense. For a second's space he stood irresolute, then, with a deploring glance at his attire, which at that moment was more obtrusively distasteful to him than at any time since he had assumed it, he stepped softly from behind the bush.

Her face was turned in the opposite direction, but in a moment the odor of the locust branch he carried had filled the air. She opened her eyes, turned her head

slightly, and saw him standing before her, dusty and pale, asking for something to eat.

She sprang up instantly and covered him with a swift, startled glance. That hurried inspection was sufficient to muster him into the great army of outcasts, few specimens of which penetrated the peaceful and plenteous seclusion that environed her. Then she remembered that there was no one within call but the negro women at the cabin, who were in as great terror of tramps as herself, and would be likely to run in the other direction as soon as they understood the situation. The bunch of violets on his dusty lapel caught her eye just in time to arrest the blood-curdling shriek rising in her throat. In another moment the intruder had removed his hat, and with that act the look of consternation faded

from her face. His boutonniere alone would have been a certificate of character; the man who had violets in buttonhole was not likely to have spoons in his pocket or murder in his heart: but a man who took off his hat in that way was above suspicion of crime. She was accustomed to seeing the male head uncovered in her presence. Every man who met her, whether he knew her or not, every negro who passed her in the road, lifted his hat; but until this moment she had no conception of how much might be conveyed in that simple gesture. Admiration—the delight of an artistic temperament in what is ideally beautiful; reverence for the being that enshrined it; a humiliating sense of his own unprepossessing appearance and unwarrantable intrusion upon the idyllic harmony of the scene; a certain lofty

courtesy defying the drapery of indigence that enveloped him;—all blended in that eloquent movement, equally remote from the servile obeisance of the negro and the off-hand greetings she received from her associates.

Yes, he was a tramp certainly, but with a difference that entitled him to humane consideration and removed for the moment her appalling dread of all such outcasts. She would give him a lunch.

She rose, caught up with a hairpin the loose, clinging mass of hair, adjusted the scarlet shawl, and led the way to the porch at the back of the house. She gave him a chair, and going to the end of the porch lifted up a clear, ringing voice, and called "Meriky!" several times.

The sound fell faintly on the ears of Meriky (America), dozing in the cabin

door, who blinked her lazy lids but did not stir. "That nigger ain't worth her salt," murmured Miss Ransome, more to herself than to her listener, as she swept a basket of hopelessly dishevelled embroidery silks off a small round table and proceeded to spread the lunch herself. Her pensioner had eaten many lunches, and had gone without many more than he had eaten, since he started upon his long, tedious tramp; he had eaten many lunches in many lands: but he could remember nothing quite so appetizing as the rosy, fragrant slices of ham, the cold chicken, the beaten biscuits, and the pitcher of cold milk that were set before him this afternoon.

When his meal was ready, Miss Ransome, who by this time had bethought her of the gallant thieveries of Claude Duval and his ilk, seated herself near the table,

so that, in case her hasty estimate of the man were at fault, she would be able to keep an eye upon the silver cup from which he was drinking his milk, and the other articles she had incautiously laid before him.

She took up the embroidery, but was not too much engaged to notice that his hands were very small and finely shaped, and that, although he was very hungry, he disposed of his food daintily, as one acquainted with polite arts.

His blond hair, longer than she was accustomed to seeing it worn by men, was pushed negligently back from a forehead whose veined pallor presented a startling contrast to the sunburnt face. His eyes had a pleasant light in them, and the short, slightly curling beard, shading from blond to pale brown, only partially concealed the

curves of a mouth that was above reproach. As Miss Ransome noted these details she was moved to speculate upon his antecedent life, and presently had him relieved against a background of romance that would have done credit to the imagination of Scott or Dumas. The slight foreign accent that colored his speech was all that was needed to give the utmost latitude to invention. She could not tell from it what he was, but he was not an American. She thought he might be French. He had at all events some connection with that old land so rich in song and story. A fervid fancy, untempered by experience, untrammelled by facts, played over him in auroral flashes, and fitted his plastic figure into a thousand romantic incidents.

As often as she looked directly at him, she caught him in the act of withdrawing

his eyes from a furtive perusal of herself ; and when they met her own fully, as they did once or twice, there crossed her mind a fleeting fragment of rhyme about something that was "deeply, darkly, beautifully blue." When he had finished, he stood before her a moment to acknowledge her kindness.

"I vill vork for you for my dinner," he said.

There was a suggestion of helplessness in his imperfect utterance that appealed to the maternal instinct like the lisp of a baby. She was so occupied with his manner of delivering it that she did not catch the import of his remark until he repeated it. Then her face flushed.

"Never mind," she answered, hastily ; "you are quite welcome ; besides, there is nothing to do."

It was singular that in the vagabond, pure and simple, there was nothing incompatible with poetic associations; but the moment she thought of him at work—carrying stove-wood or cutting weeds to pay for his dinner—the prismatic fantasy in which he had just been figuring dissolved instantly, leaving only the bare, unromantic fact of beggary.

"Den I vill sing you a song," he said, with the same soft intonation and appealing faultiness of speech, as he stood looking down at the guitar that lay on a chair by her.

She handed him the instrument, and noticed that his hands adjusted themselves to neck and strings with a familiar grace which all her patient practice had not yet acquired.

She watched him enviously, as, stand-

ing a little below her on the steps of the porch, he tuned the guitar and daintily picked a prelude.

Then, in a voice soft, mellifluous, sweeter than anything she had dreamed possible from a male throat, came the opening measure of Schubert's serenade modulated to a breath. The air was unfamiliar, the language strange—she could not understand a line of it; but what matter? What soul attuned to music could mistake the burden of that exquisite melody, tossed off in an obscure beer-cellar to a chorus of clinking glasses and drunken laughter, but freighted forever with the tremulous ecstasy of "doubtful hope," embodying the most tender and ethereal dream of love that heart of man has conceived? She had never before heard a male voice mellowed by culture,

and at the first phrase of that song, in which a soul seemed exhaled, she dropped the embroidery in her lap and leaned back in her chair. At the pleading pause in the minor change, "Liebchen, höre mich," a strange, new feeling stirred within her, and something rose in her throat.

"Bebend harr' ich dir entgegen, komm, beglücke mich, Komm, beglücke mich, beglücke mich," he sang, with appealing iteration; and as the last word fell fainting a semitone above the original keynote, leaving a feeling of prayer unanswered, the figure on the step was seen dimly as through a mist.

He returned the instrument, which she took from him without a word, and sat watching him through moist lashes as he turned away. In a moment the battered slouch hat had fallen over him like an

extinguisher, and a tramp of the most ordinary and uninteresting appearance was effaced by the mass of fluffy white pompons that covered the snowball-bush at the end of the porch. As he crossed the lawn on the way out, he paused beside the hammock. Caught in the meshes of the net was a piece of pink ribbon that had been torn from Miss Ransome's dress in the violent attempt to rise that followed her first glimpse of the intruder. The tramp disengaged it, and, after pressing his lips to it, tied it in his buttonhole, taking care to spread out the knot and arrange the loops effectively, and went out toward the road, humming, softly, "*Liebchen, höre mich.*"

Miss Ransome's eyes returned from the snowball-bush behind which the figure had disappeared to the spot where it had stood,

and they rested upon a bunch of violets that lay on the step. She took them up gently, noticed that the stems were neatly woven together with a blade of grass, and pinned them on the bosom of her dress.

II.

COLONEL RANSOME's household consisted of himself, his daughter Lydia, and a large number of negroes of all sizes, the small ones being especially numerous and prominent. It may be well to remark in passing that he came legitimately by the two essentials of a "Kentucky gentleman," against which the outside world has broken so many shafts of derision—his title and his pride of ancestry.

His baptismal names, Wickliffe Preston, proclaimed his derivation from two of the most prominent families in the State, and, through them, his connection either by blood or marriage with a majority of the historic names of Kentucky and Virginia.

On his mother's side he traced his lineage back through the tough fibre of the MacDowell stock to the sturdy house of Argyll. It was through the maternal strain that he was turned away from the easy-going faith known to the ruffle-shirted forefathers of the other branch of the family as the Church of England, to the uncompromising Presbyterianism to which he subscribed. His religious belief was not so dominant in character as to exert an appreciable influence upon his outer life, but it was a part of the man, and as far as it went it was Calvinistic. It had come down to him along with the ancestral record and the family silver, and he no more thought of turning it over for inspection than of questioning the solidity of his plate or the authenticity of his pedigree. He had perhaps but an imperfect impression of the

articles embraced in his creed, but anything that could have been shown to exist therein would have met with his instant approval and strenuous defence. He would have fought for it as valiantly, bled for it as cheerfully, as he had fought and bled for State rights.

His ancestors had been conspicuously concerned in every historic event of importance since their first settlement in Virginia; and, according to his reasoning, the men who bought with their blood the greatest country on earth, and nursed it through a perilous infancy, were as gloriously deserving of knighthood as the legions that followed William the Conqueror into England. Their deeds were not less heroic because they lacked the heraldic patent that was but the outward symbol of achievement; their nobility was none the

less real because untitled : and he was as proudly conscious of good blood as if his plate had borne a dozen quarterings.

Sired by an illustrious line of fighters, his military record followed naturally. At the beginning of the war, when the State Guard, hotly indignant at the action of Kentucky, shouldered the government arms and marched after Buckner into Tennessee, Wickliffe Ransome made one of the impatient throng of horsemen who for weeks after the abandonment of neutrality filled all the roads leading southward, hurrying across the line to cast in their lot with the young Confederacy. He started with the Sixth Kentucky, and followed its fortunes through the war, winning his promotion brilliantly in a brigade that fought like the three hundred at Thermopylæ. When the crowning dis-

aster came, and he returned, covered with the humiliation of defeat, he found his wife dead, and his possessions reduced to a motherless daughter then nine years of age, four hundred acres of bluegrass land overgrown with weeds and brush, and the dismantled wreck of a once luxurious homestead standing open to the wind and rain

The house was not fit to live in, and the land was worth nothing without the labor that had made it profitable. The negroes were free, and there was no money to begin the work of reparation. The child and the sister, widowed by the conflict, who must hereafter depend upon him for support, spurred him to endeavor. The land was mortgaged, and with the money thus obtained the house was repaired, stock and farming implements were

bought, and a number of negroes were collected who, now that there was nothing more to steal in the bare land, were willing to work upon promise of pay. Mrs. Payne, the Colonel's widowed sister, who had cared for his daughter since her mother's death, came to live with him; and under her womanly and ingenious supervision the home began to assume something of the old luxurious aspect. Gradually the wilderness was reclaimed, and blossomed as the rose, yielding the more abundantly for its season of rest. It was marvellous how quickly all trace of devastation vanished. Three years after the surrender of Lee a stranger travelling through the country, who had seen it in war-time, congratulated the Colonel on the swift recovery from disaster.

"Well," replied the Colonel, proudly,

"it is God's country, and the land don't need much coaxin'."

It was now ten years since the war. The cheery little woman who had presided over the Colonel's house, and bestowed a tender maternal care upon his child, was dead, and the bright-eyed, fair-haired daughter had risen to the dignity of managing his domestic affairs.

The Colonel was still young in spite of his forty-five years and the iron-gray locks that waved thickly about his fine head. He was six feet two inches in height, and the figure, once slender and wiry, had acquired in the last decade a generous breadth of chest and shoulder that was massive without being ponderous; and this, with his erect military carriage, gave him an imposing presence; on horseback he was superb. The fire of youth still

burned in his steel-blue eye; and in the strong, combative chin and the level line of the lips lurked the unflinching courage, the tenacity of opinion and purpose, that were part of his inheritance. His face was suffused with a mild ruddiness induced by liberal living and an habitual but temperate use of the native beverage in its purity and the yellow perfection of age. The habit of command at home and in the field had fixed upon him the authoritative manner that a stranger would mistake for arrogance, which in the presence of his friends, tempered by the suavity of the man of the world, was at once commanding and gentle.

Toward women he bore himself with the insidious persuasiveness, the soft, caressing manner peculiar to the Southerner, for which the Kentuckian is pre-eminently dis-

tinguished—a manner in which a flattering show of homage is blended with that tender and apparently absorbing solicitude by which a man seems to envelop the object of his attentions in a protecting presence; to become at the same moment her guardian and her slave; to surround her with an atmosphere of sanctity while imploring the favor that would dissipate it;—a manner irresistibly fascinating to women, even when it is known to be insincere.

His attitude toward the sex was characteristic. Beauty was not only a charm, but a virtue. The woman who had no claim to beauty was a social nonentity; she who had lost the bloom and freshness of youth, an unlit shrine, interesting only as an altar round which had once shone the flame that compelled his worship. To him the ideal woman was, first of all beautiful, and one

who could think only with her heart. All mental activity was regarded as pernicious, and the woman who exhibited signs of it was held in the same curious aloofness with which he would have examined some strange, glittering insect that might or might not have a sting. A woman could not possibly think lucidly; any attempt on her part to deal at first hand with the problems of life could only result in increased confusion; it were far better that she did not meddle with edged tools. No gift, spiritual or mental, could compensate him for the absence of that absolute physical perfection which the Kentuckian seeks with equal pertinacity in his sweetheart and his horse: in the realization of which he believes "careful grooming" to play a part only second to that of "good blood."

The love of such a man might be lack-

ing in poetry, in ideality, even in the "staying" quality he considers so essential to man and beast, but it was edged with the keen relish of the connoisseur, which was never wholly lost in the lover. Like all his countrymen, Colonel Ransome subscribed loyally to the belief that Kentucky women lead the world in beauty; and while this opinion was attributable in a measure to a natural pride in the products of his native State, it was not without an element of sound philosophy. Occupied for the greater portion of his life with the care and breeding of blooded stock, experience had taught him the power of selection in accenting a type when exercised through successive generations with reference to the same quality. He considered the physical perfection of Kentucky women directly due to the fastidious instinct of

natural selection in the men, which made beauty the dominant consideration in marriage. With this irresistible influence at work in the interest of beauty it were indeed singular if surpassing results were not obtained. He frequently remarked that a man owed it to his children to marry a fine woman; and those who had known his wife cheerfully testified that he had fully discharged his obligation to posterity. Indeed, his daughter Lydia was a sufficient proof of the possibilities of his theory when systematically carried out. His wife died young; he had been spared the ordeal of watching her fade and grow old; and death and time had obliterated such trifling imperfections of temperament as might have jarred his domestic harmony, leaving only the charm of a beautiful and gracious presence that was his one sacred memory.

Lydia had rewarded his discriminating choice by faithfully reproducing the attractions that influenced it. Like her mother, she had that fineness of organism that is the first requisite of beauty; she had the same exquisite pearly flesh-tint that is neither pallid nor ruddy, the same delicate arch of the brow, and that dark shading of brows and lashes that gives a peculiar piquancy of coloring to an ensemble otherwise purely blond. The profile that gained a subtle individual charm by its deviation from the prescribed line, the sensitive curve of the nostrils, the full, warm mouth were the same; but she had a unique charm of her own imparted by the temper of the paternal metal. She reflected her father's salient traits, and in her carriage, which he would have described as a "free gait," there was a dash of the military

erectness and precision of movement that distinguished his own bearing. A personality charged with a fine nervous fire and an effervescent flow of vitality that found expression in the mobile and rapid play of features registering every fleeting thought, every passing emotion, gave to her that irresistible sparkle beside which the dreamy languor of the Oriental becomes dull, the classic repose of Greek ideals cold and impassive.

The red gold of ripe corn was on her hair, and in the liquid depths of her eyes was a glow of rich, warm amber-brown that is most nearly approached by the color of fine old whisky. She shared her father's opinions, and endorsed his politics with that feminine loyalty that is the more stanch and abiding because void of understanding. She did not know why her

father was a Democrat, but she was quite sure that his principles were the only ones that could be entertained by a gentleman, that his political position was the only one tenable. She was proud of his military record. It surrounded him with a halo of heroism, a glamour of romance that gave him a certain sacredness in her eyes. She loved to think, as she watched him riding across his own peaceful fields, that it was thus, with just as little fear, with the same superb horsemanship, but with more of fire and ardor, he had ridden at the enemy in those terrible days of wreck and disaster. "What a pity it had all been for nothing!" At this thought the tears would come. The gory recital of "Mission Ridge" and Chickamauga was an old story to her, but she heard it always with a heart swelling with the admiration of physical courage

and recklessness of life that had come to her with her blood.

The third contingent of the Colonel's household, the negroes, cut a conspicuous figure in his fortunes. Impoverished by their emancipation, and compelled to feed them when he could no longer compel them to work, they were a continual drain upon his resources, the extent of which he did not realize, because he had been accustomed all his life to seeing them around him in numbers, and considered them indispensable to a moderately comfortable existence.

His obtuseness to the immediate demand for remedial measures was due to two causes: first, to the necessity for labor of some kind to till the land; second, to an inherent love of ease and display, fostered by education and pampered by

indulgence until it had become the predominating influence of his life. The long exemption through years of prosperity, when personal exertion was unnecessary, had resulted in the lofty aloofness from vulgar occupations that had become second nature. He belonged to a class of men whom future generations, bred in an atmosphere of new ideas, will not readily understand. Active, determined, fertile in resource, but dominated by an intense distaste for personal exertion; easily fatigued under ordinary circumstances, but displaying in an emergency, through sheer force of will, surpassing vigor and endurance. Not given to athletic sports, yet compact, well-grown, and muscular; bearing uncomplainingly the rigors and privations of war that try men's souls more than the day of battle, but distinguished in time

of peace for an insuperable aversion to effort that amounted to actual helplessness; regarding women with a paternal indulgence unlimited in certain directions, yet frequently requiring of them services no longer to be demanded of the negroes, which they were too indolent to perform for themselves.

These exactions were in the majority of cases unconscious. The man who made them would have resented vigorously the imputation that he was pampered by the women of his household at the expense of their own comfort. He invariably preserved the old formula. "Have this or that done," he would remark to his sister or daughter, oblivious of the fact that now there was no one to do it but the person addressed. Never at any time was there a glimmer of suspicion that there was any-

thing in his behavior at variance with the chivalric sentiments and grandiloquent oratory with which he would have responded to such a toast as "The Women of Kentucky." A single incident of Colonel Ransome's daily life will serve to illustrate the demand for personal attention characteristic of the Kentuckian of this period. His morning toilet was the event of the day, unless the repetition of it, which in warm weather always occurred at noon, might be considered of equal importance. The water for the bath had to be carried from the spring, which was nearly a quarter of a mile from the house. In order to get a sufficient quantity within a reasonable time several negroes were engaged in the transportation at once. The toilet proper was an elaborate process, performed always with the same deliberate precision,

during which the master of the house was attended by half-a-dozen negroes of both sexes and all sizes, in the various capacities of bootblack, purveyors of towels, shaving water, and fresh linen, not to mention the boy who saddled and held his horse until he was ready to mount, or those who served him as errand boys or bearers of messages to others beyond the reach of his voice.

A grateful relief pervaded the premises when the ceremony was finished, and "Mahs Wick," immaculate, glowing, and odorous from the lavish application of soap, passed out, leaving behind him a room so thickly strewn with limp towels and discarded linen that it looked like the track of a cyclone. A stranger would have supposed that so much bustling preparation indicated a trip to town, or at least a

ride through the neighborhood, and would have been surprised when it was all over to see the Colonel mount his sleek gray mare, groomed as if for a premium show, and rack off to the field to superintend the hands, who, accustomed to an overseer, worked only under his personal eye.

In addition to the numerous retinue that served about the house, there must be field-hands and stable-hands, and the habitual prodigality was displayed in the number employed. The extravagance was not, however, wholly without excuse. At least three negroes were required to do the work of one active, energetic white man. They had to be paid the same, and they ate just as much. When a man was hired to work on the place, he had to be furnished with a cabin to live in; his fuel came from the Colonel's wood-pile or coal-house, his food

from the Colonel's table ; and it was seldom that he did not bring a family with him. Sometimes the women worked in the house ; oftener they did nothing more profitable than to accumulate with exasperating ease and rapidity a worthless brood that fed, like grasshoppers, on the fat of the land.

Now that the negroes were free to choose their masters, they flocked where there was the fairest promise of good living ; and they seemed to sniff from afar "Mahs Wick's" bounty and abundance. They were just as numerous around him as they had been before the war, and the only difference in their condition was an incredible increase in shiftlessness, raggedness, and impertinence. In spite of their small deserts, Colonel Ransome, like all men who had owned slaves, had a weak-

ness for the negro. Naturally generous, he treated them with an indulgence that a Northern employer could neither understand nor approve ; in return for which they plundered his "truck patch" and clandestinely peddled the watermelons they were unable to consume. When his attention was called to the number of mouths fed daily from his storeroom and smokehouse, he replied good-naturedly : "If you don't give them what they can eat, they'll steal it. You can't get out of feedin' 'em, ar' you might as well have 'em where you can get some good out of 'em."

He liked to see them about him. Their presence in numbers accorded with the inherent tendency to pomp and ostentation that distinguished his class. They reminded him of "old times," they helped him to forget the humiliation of defeat, the

outrage of emancipation that was to him nothing more than a violent confiscation of property. It was some small consolation to be able to remark, as he frequently did, that, "In spite of their damned meddling, things were not so very different after all."

III.

THE remaining factor in the Colonel's destiny was the friends, who, like the negroes, were numerous and always with him. His dinners were famous in a land celebrated for its *cuisine*. Nowhere in all the Bluegrass region could a saddle of south-down mutton be found in such juicy perfection as on Wick Ransome's table. His cellar contained an apparently inexhaustible supply of native wine; and from a long, narrow closet in the dining-room came forth, on special occasions, imported varieties selected with the discrimination of experience and a fastidious taste. His lavish hospitality, his love of good company, the seductive atmosphere of abundance un-

grudgingly shared that surrounded him, drew about him the remnant of ante-bellum society that had survived defeat and loss. His house became the centre of the gay, brilliant coterie who found it possible to take up the old luxurious life where they had dropped it at the sound of "boots and saddles;" and this element was yearly reinforced by the natural increase of the population, and the incursion of visitors from all parts of the country. In summer his house was a resort to which his city friends flocked, bringing horses, equipages, servants. Any man or woman entitled to the friendship of a gentleman was welcome to come and sojourn there indefinitely, and friends brought their friends. As a resort the place had many attractions besides the cellar, the well-filled table, and the debonair courtesy of the host. It was near

enough to the Kentucky River for a party to drive down and back in a day, taking a picnic dinner in the midst of wild scenery of unrivalled picturesqueness; there was the Colonel's handsome daughter to preside over the festivities; the Colonel's horses always at the free disposal of his guests; his fish-pond, from which, even in midsummer, could be drawn the savory perch and newlight that nobody could fry quite so appetizingly as old Cynthy, the Colonel's cook.

No one enjoyed these annual invasions of his premises more than the Colonel. Each member of the throng that gathered around him felt a sort of proud proprietorship in "Wick."

His fine, commanding figure, his handsome face radiating good-fellowship, his identification with the cause lost but rev-

erently remembered, endeared him to them. He was a splendid expression of the type of manhood they admired; he was one with them in their pride of ancestry, their race prejudice, their views of government; he represented them in every phase of their life, social and political. This feeling was made apparent to him in a thousand flatteries—open and insidious. He lived in an atmosphere of adulation, gratifying to his inborn love of supremacy, that finally became as necessary to him as the attendance of his servants.

The worm in the bud of this gay, imperious life was the mortgage and the debts that every year became more and more of an incubus. Colonel Ransome could not understand how it was that, with four hundred acres of the best land in the

State, yielding abundantly every year, and the annual sale of stock, from which he realized thousands of dollars, he could not "make both ends meet." Why the profits of his farm and stable did not cover the expense of his establishment was a problem with which he grappled in vain. It would be just as far from practical solution on the last day of his life as in the hour it first confronted him. If he saw the necessity for curtailing expenses, he never found the precise time or place for putting on the brakes. If it occurred to him that the negroes who drained him and the friends who visited him were partially responsible for the inadequacy of his income, he turned wearily from the thought as from an evil without remedy. If it was bad getting on with the negroes, getting on without them was impossible. The

alternative of restricting himself to a rigid schedule of economy that would exclude his friends from a free participation in his abundance and his pleasures was so repulsive to his feelings, his taste, his conception of hospitality, that he did not entertain it for a moment. The few friends who thought they discerned, beneath the purple and fine linen of high life, the spectre of impending bankruptcy, remarked commiseratingly to each other that "It was a pity Wick did not manage better," and came down the next summer and preyed upon him as usual.

Years before, the Colonel had cast a hopeful eye on young Beverly Johnson, whose ample estate joined his own. If Beverly should marry Lydia, he could save her inheritance from the hammer; and for a long time her father had been unable to

see any other way out of the slough into which he had been steadily ploughing since 1865. The thing had come about as he desired—in a perfectly simple and natural way, and without any interference on his part. Beverly and Lydia had grown up together, had seen each other every day of their lives, except when she was at school and he at college, during which period they had carried on a mildly amatory correspondence. The brief courtship that followed their return ended in a formal proposal by Beverly, who, from the first moment of their reunion, had been in a condition bordering on dementia, and its acceptance by Lydia, who made up for any lack of demonstrative fervor by a steady graciousness of demeanor.

To her it seemed a matter of course that she should marry Bev. Next to her father

he was the handsomest man she knew. She sometimes wished he were an inch taller and had something of her father's imperial manner and martial dash. But men like her father were rare, and Bev was nearer the realization of her conception of manhood than anyone else within the range of her acquaintance, which was extensive. She would have liked him better had he been a part of that heroic struggle that raised her father above ordinary men in her eyes, but it was Bev's misfortune, not his fault, that he had been too young to fight. He had often expressed regret that he had not been old enough to take a hand in that strife, none the less glorious in his estimation because the event was dire. She was sure he would have made a brave soldier if he had had a chance ; and he was the pick of the

country, everybody knew that. Because she considered him the pick of the country she had always intended marrying him. This intention, which had never wavered, dated back to her remotest remembrance. During the naïve period of childhood she had frequently advised him of it, and it apparently met with his approval, though he manifested none of the enthusiasm that marked the subsequent interval, through which Lydia maintained a wary reserve that led him to believe she had changed her mind.

It had never occurred to her that in the course of events he might form other plans. Had the thought ever come to her, she had enough of her father's debonair confidence, and was sufficiently conscious of her personal advantages, to dismiss it without serious consideration. Though

fond of him, her feeling was not of a character to disturb the even flow of her existence; and she had always been too well assured of his devotion to experience the thrill of triumph in its consummation that other women enjoy under similar circumstances.

In due time the lover, floating airily on the conviction that no other man had been so lucky since the rite of marriage was instituted, came to talk the affair over with his father-in-law-elect. It was now that Colonel Ransome inflicted upon himself the crucifixion of making a clean breast of the supposed secret of his impending ruin. Beverly was not surprised. He was not blind: he had seen long before where all that reckless extravagance must lead. The end was a little nearer than he thought, but it made no difference in his plans. He

would be just as proud of Lyd, he affirmed, if she hadn't a cent. He had reached that beatific state in which a man wants to take the world in his arms and kiss it, and a national panic could not have subdued his ardor. In a burst of generosity he proposed to take up the mortgage at once and relieve the Colonel from all further anxiety.

"You see, Colonel," remarked the young man, sagely, "it was bound to come, with those bloods livin' off you all summer and the darkies thievin' from you the year round. But you couldn't help it. You can't get rid of the niggers, and a man can't ask his friends to stay at home. It will all be right, though. What I've got is yours if you want it; and you can depend on me not to let the place go out of the family. I've had too many good times here

myself to want to see it in the han's of strangers."

From no other man could Colonel Ransome have accepted such material consolation without the bitterest humiliation. But Bev was like his own son. He had spent almost as much of his time at the Colonel's house as he had at his own. His father had been the Colonel's classmate at college, his companion-in-arms. There had been no stancher friend, no braver soldier, than Hardin Johnson; there was no brighter record in all that weary struggle than his. When he fell in battle, it was to Wickliffe Ransome that he confided his dying messages; and the Colonel had always shown an indulgent fondness for the son of so dear a friend, so valiant a soldier, even before he began to regard him as a possible solution of his domestic

problem. This affectionate interest was fully returned by the younger man, for whom his father's friend and comrade embodied at once the dignity and heroism of a supreme struggle and the profound pathos of defeat. He had early discovered the weak spot in the Colonel's character, but loyally refrained from judging him. As the victim of Northern interference, he was entitled to indulgence and sympathy, and Bev was as full of excuses for him as Lydia herself could have been had she been capable of divining the necessity for them.

At the close of the interview that terminated with Beverly's generous proposition, Colonel Ransome immediately sought his daughter, resolved to make an unreserved statement of the situation, and give Bev the full benefit of his handsome behavior.

He admired the young fellow's contempt for money, the youthful ardor and loverlike enthusiasm with which he set his sweet-heart above everything, in an age when young men were beginning to sacrifice their instinctive preference for beauty on the altar of greed. Miss Ransome listened to her father's recital without comment. In one aspect the situation was humiliating; in another, extremely flattering; but she could not fully appreciate it from either point of view. "It was nice of Bev," but it was no more than was to be expected of the man she had honored with her preference. She did not know enough of the value of money to measure the financial obligation; and the privations entailed by the absence of wealth were too remote from her experience for her to realize what he had saved her from. She

could not apprehend, so acutely as her father, all that was involved in the sale of an estate. To him it meant much more than the mere loss of property, though that was sufficiently appalling to a man of his tastes and habits. It meant exile from the only country in which living could be a pleasure ; it meant the abdication of the enviable position he held in the community ; it meant the immediate and permanent cessation of the ostentatious hospitality for which he was noted. These harrowing possibilities were now removed ; the incubus was lifted ; and he at least was not likely to undervalue the opportune generosity that had rescued him.

It was now April ; Lydia and Beverly were to be married in October, and the Colonel's face was less sternly thoughtful in moments of repose than it had been for

years. The usual swarm of summer visitors was expected, and preparations for their entertainment were going steadily forward. This would be the last summer Lydia would preside as hostess over the festivities of the dashing, convivial throng of "blue-bloods" that gathered annually around her father's table. She would not have been his daughter had she not enjoyed her position ; and a Southern girl at that age enjoys everything. She knows that her social career is practically finished when she marries, and she marries very young.

She keenly realizes the exceeding brevity of that delicious interregnum between the authority of the parent and that of the husband. She knows that her social record must be made before it is over ; that she abdicates her belleship with her nuptial

vows; that, owing to the strict code obtaining in her country, marriage, to her, is like death to the unconverted—it admits of no subsequent capitulation. The determination to wring this brief interval dry of enjoyment, the unwearying effort to get at the last sweet drop, give her an eager zest of life that makes her an unfailing stimulant to all who come in contact with her, keep her strung up to a pitch of enthusiasm that is irresistibly infectious. She has no time to discriminate; everything pleases her; she is never tired, never bored. She blooms like a cactus—all at once. Her *début* is like the popping of a champagne cork. She imparts the effervescent sparkle of that incomparable vintage to the current with which she mingles; she falls upon the dull and colorless conventions of society like a flash of iridescence; with her volatile, in-

exhaustible flow of animal spirits she combines, within certain limits, an impetuous abandon that makes her the nearest approach yet discovered to the "Eve innocent, yet fallen" of Chateaubriand. Before she has time to lose the fire and freshness of youth she is hurried away to the priest, and disappears from the horizon amid the gorgeous blazonry of an elaborate wedding, a ceremony through which the groom moves meekly inconspicuous, as might some antique captive through the pomp and pageantry of a Roman triumph.

From that moment she is a vanished delight, a departed glory, a hallowed tradition to the men who did not achieve the sublime happiness of marrying her; but she is a queen no more. The allegiance, the homage she formerly commanded are transferred without loss of time, and she is ever

after spoken of in the past tense. The average length of a career is three years; more frequently it is but two; often but one. This was Miss Ransome's third summer, and her last. She intended it to be a brilliant one.

IV.

It is only fair to exonerate Miss Ransome from the suspicion of posing on the lawn for effect. She had gone there with the most commonplace purpose imaginable—that of drying the hair she had just washed, in the wind and sun. This method involved much less labor than rubbing it dry with a towel, and it gave her an opportunity to finish at the same time the novel she had been reading in a desultory way for a week. She felt perfectly secure on the lawn in a pink wrapper in the middle of the afternoon, for the dweller in the country is not subject to the unexpected calls that make urban life a bondage. There was barely one chance in a hundred

that she would be interrupted, and the hundredth chance had befallen. Upon reflection she feared she had presented a very ungraceful, not to say immodest, figure in the hammock. She would have given much to know just how she appeared to the intruder, though he was only a tramp. She blushed as she remembered the exposed foot and ankle; and that night, as she stood before the mirror combing out the tangled mass of hair, she was haunted by an echo of that plaintive "Liebchen, höre mich." She had not lighted the lamp, for the moon flooded the room; and when she had finished her hair, she sat down in the rocker by the window and looked out upon the moonlit garden and the blossomy orchard slope beyond.

For the first time in her life something like a regret for the narrow limits of her

experience stirred in her; but the want, whatever it might be, was intangible and undefined. What was the world like outside this "garden spot"—the world from which he had come with his soft, pleading voice, and his never-to-be-forgotten song? Where and to whom would he next sing it in payment for a dinner?

The next morning, as Lydia and her father sat at breakfast, the latter remarked:

"Well, Lyd, I've got you a gardener at last. He don't look like he is much account; but if you watch him close enough, maybe you can make him do till old Dave gets well. I met him in the road last night as I came home, and he asked for work. The po' devil looked so hard up I thought I'd give him a chance."

"We need somebody in the garden awful bad," replied Lydia. "When's he comin'?"

"He's here now. I brought him along with me in the buggy, an' told him he could sleep in Schneider's cabin."

"He's white, then."

"Yes, and Dutch as kraut. I told him to go round to the garden as soon as he got his breakfast, an' you'd give him his orders."

It was a warm, bright morning, the sort of day that, coming early in spring, fills the amateur florist with feverish activity; and as soon as breakfast was over, Lydia, happy in the knowledge that at last she had somebody to do what was so needed, hurried out in the pink wrapper of yesterday and an ample sun-bonnet to pounce greedily on the new man, and get as much as possible out of him in the shortest space of time. The portion set apart for flowers was the lower end of the garden proper; a

large square of ground running up into the angle formed by the L of the house and laid off geometrically, in beds with blue-grass borders, and earthen walks between. In the center stood a circular frame covered with a mat of honeysuckle, offering a refreshing shelter from the sun, which was getting very hot. She drew a rustic seat into the shadow and waited. In a few minutes she heard the click of the garden gate, and, looking up, saw the tramp of yesterday approaching leisurely, a knot of pink ribbon in his button-hole. The blood surged up into her temples as she remarked his decoration and noted the exact spot upon her gown from which it had disappeared. By this time he had reached her and had bared his fine head with the inimitable gesture that had won him his dinner the day before. For some reason it

did not impress her now as then. The pink ribbon that would have been a romantic and inoffensive fancy in a picturesque vagabond who was nothing to her was egregious presumption in her servant, and she resented it. Moreover, she was extremely mortified at having spent an afternoon in rearing a dream palace about a person "as Dutch as kraut," in whom her father had instantly recognized "a po' devil," and nothing more ; whom her father held in that compassionate contempt that was more damning than denunciation.

She understood perfectly that the only thing to do was to ignore the decoration ; but the chill of November was in her manner as she rose and proceeded to give directions in a cold, peremptory tone she never thought of using to the negroes. He stood meanwhile hat in hand, his attitude

the supreme expression of respectful attention. He was not looking at her, but she could just catch a gleam in his eye that contradicted, effaced his assumption of humility. It first puzzled, then annoyed her, until her eye chanced to fall upon the bosom of her dress, where, withered, forgotten, but clamorous of injudicious interest, drooped the violets she had picked up from the step. The blood mounted again under the sun-bonnet, but she went on giving her orders, and presently unfastened the flowers, and tossed them carelessly where he could not fail to see them. When he began work she went back to the rustic seat under the honeysuckle, and sat watching him from the shadow. She was ill at ease. The illusions of yesterday had been rudely dissipated: the romantic vagabond had sunk to the level of a common laborer;

the troubadour was extinguished in the Dutchman who had slept in the cabin with Schneider. Had he belonged to any other nationality it would not have been so bad. She had seen but few Germans, and those of the lowest class. There was no room in her narrow experience for comparison, for discrimination. Schneider had been there a year, and he had been treated in all respects as one of the negroes, except that in consideration of his white skin he had been given a bed to himself and allowed to eat at the Colonel's table after the family were through. Even the negroes looked down upon a "white nigga." The condition of servitude was the paramount fact that fixed a man's place in the social scale; but a white servant was an anomaly, a foreigner was an uncertain quantity in the social equation, he was not quite as good as a

negro. This man was Schneider's countryman and fellow-servant, and she had worn his violets, and he had seen them. He was not like Schneider. She knew that as well to-day as she did yesterday; but it could make no difference so long as he was her father's servant. She was humiliated by his discovery of the interest she had felt in him the day before, and she decided that his immediate dismissal was the only thing that could reinstate her in her own estimation.

She had been so occupied with these thoughts that, although looking directly at him, she had not noticed that he was ruthlessly spading up the young seedling verbenas she had intended transplanting. She saw it now and rushed fiercely to the rescue, glad of an opportunity to find fault with another than herself.

"You are buryin' all my verbenas," she called, in a tone of vexation.

"W'ich is dose?" he asked humbly, and the voice was irresistibly softening.

"These with the rough leaves," she replied, taking a trowel, with which she began digging them up out of his way.

He examined the plant closely, and then with another trowel began digging, and did not attempt to use the spade again until sure there was not another verberna in the bed.

After this experience she dared not leave him alone in the garden. She stayed by him all day, jealously watching every movement of spade or hoe. He was so obliging, so eager to please, so remorseful for the plants irrecoverably buried, that she could but pardon his ignorance. This was the more easily

done as the day wore on, and there was nothing after that one unguarded glance to remind her of the unbecoming interest she had inadvertently betrayed. The pink ribbon was still in view, but after a time she did not notice that. His name was Karl, and she thought it had a pretty sound when he pronounced it. His voice was as winning when he spoke as when he sang. She liked to hear him talk ; and when the irritation of the morning began to wear off, she kept him answering questions, that she might be amused by his doubtful struggle with a strange tongue. The peculiar modulation of his voice, the softening of the consonants, the lingual caress on certain vowels, his odd application of the words themselves, were as ingratiating as the imperfect utterance of a child. Her English was no better

than his, though it was different, and she did not have a monopoly of amusement. What he knew of the language he had learned according to the stiff and formal manner of books, and her idioms, her provincialisms, her continual slurring of consonants when she did not drop them altogether, as she invariably did at the end of a word or syllable, the blurring of vowels and the substituting of one vowel sound for another,—presented a unique variation of speech that seemed to occupy a middle ground between the language proper and the dialect spoken by the negroes. He wondered whether she would be able to read it were it spelled out to her phonetically, and finally decided that she would not; but it was not unpleasant to hear as she uttered it, with her soft intonation and lingering drawl.

Karl worked much more briskly than old Dave; and Lydia, surprised when night came at what he had accomplished, determined to keep him till the end of the week, by which time they might find some one else. She hovered about him continually, in the fear of further depredation to her flowers; but he was so careful, displayed so much energy, such marvellous quickness in learning, so much obliging readiness, and was withal so apparently oblivious of the initial incident of their acquaintance during those days of probation, that, when the end of the week came, she had decided that he might stay until the garden was all in. In the first shock of discovery she had unduly magnified a circumstance that was beneath her notice. She saw it now in its real significance, which was slight, and she knew it was not

likely they would find anyone who would do better than he. There was no telling when old Dave would be well enough to go to work ; he was not worth much at his best ; and they were already much behind with the kitchen-garden, which in summer was the principal source of supply.

Lydia's enthusiasm in the culture of flowers amounted to a passion. With most women, flowers are either a sentiment or a decoration. To Lydia they were living things, each one of which had a biography. She knew every plant in her collection intimately, and remembered where and when it had come into her possession. Many of them she had bought at the greenhouses, but there were others which combined the sentimental associations of a souvenir with the zest and pleasure

incidental to acquiring a new variety. When presented with a bouquet, she searched it carefully to see if it contained anything she did not have. If it did, the slips were stuck down somewhere to grow. She was remarkably successful, and was proud of her garden, which was her chief occupation and keenest pleasure. It engaged her to the exclusion of the menagerie of pets upon which girls of her age usually fritter away their time and the emotional activity of adolescence. Its interest could not be fathomed by one ignorant of the subject or less enthusiastic than herself. The fancy was not an inexpensive one; but her father, who took a pride in denying her nothing that money could procure, humored it as he had once humored a similar fancy in the direction of music. As Lyd's hobby he looked upon

it with benign tolerance ; but Dave was not so indulgent. He regarded the flower garden as a nuisance and an imposition, since it added to his labors and brought no return that he could appreciate. His indignation, when first informed that he would be expected to attend to it, was boundless ; and though he did not openly rebel he maintained from first to last an attitude of sullen reluctance that was a continual trial to Lydia and acted like a cold compress on her enthusiasm. Nothing could have recommended the new gardener more effectively than the cheerful activity he displayed in this particular spot, dear to her heart but despised of all men. The sympathy and the ardor he manifested in the pursuit of his occupation were a continual surprise and delight to her. She could not understand it. In a community

where labor still had all the terror of the primeval curse, it seemed marvellous that a man should take pleasure in anything involving toil. She liked to work in the garden; but then the flowers were hers, and when she did not want to work she could be idle. It was different with Karl. The vegetable garden claimed a large part of his time, especially as they were a little later than usual getting it in. Sometimes for several days together he would be engaged there, and if, after he had finished his day's work, she called on him to water the flowers, not without some slight compunction, he responded with a smiling alacrity that almost took her breath. He was never too tired to serve her; it was never too early in the morning or too late at night for her to command him to the utmost extent of his ability. When

she repeatedly changed her mind about the filling of a basket or the laying-off of a bed, he addressed himself to the one-hundreth whim with the same smiling assiduity that had distinguished his first attempt. She had never seen anything like it in her life. It was beyond her comprehension, but it was intensely gratifying; and in addition to its practical value, his willingness had the engaging interest of a new study. She found too that he could talk intelligently about flowers, and that he liked to talk about them. This was a pleasure she had never before enjoyed. She had no means of knowing whether this enthusiasm was real or assumed. She could not know that he would have shown the same absorbing interest in pig-iron had she chosen to discuss it with him; but she did observe that frequently, in an animated

debate about a plant or a plan, the arbitrary distinction of mistress and servant seemed to melt away.

One of Lydia's horticultural triumphs was the fern-bed, which filled the angle formed by the L of the house. Most persons found ferns difficult to manage, and, after one or two ineffectual attempts to transplant them, gave them up. But Lydia persisted, and finally stumbled on the secret of "leaf-mould" and old roots. The success was not attained without great perseverance and much patient care, and every spring a part of the bed had to be replanted. The ferns grew in abundance along the creek, which was one of the many branches of the Elkhorn; and Lydia took the liveliest pleasure in hunting them in the secluded and picturesque nooks among the boldest of the cliffs. Other

wild things grew along the creek that were equally desirable additions to her ornamental baskets, among them the moss with which she lined her wire hanging-baskets, and the trailing ground-ivy that could be used effectively in so many ways. During the spring and summer she made numerous excursions in search of moss and roots, attended by old Dave, who drove the phaeton, carried the baskets, and added the feeling of security only to be provided by the shadow of a human presence to what had in other respects all the charm of a solitary ramble. She enjoyed these trips intensely, but the pleasure was always more or less dashed with compunction for dragging Dave's rheumatic legs over those sharp ledges: and Dave groaned and grunted so continually that she was never for a moment allowed to forget that she

was victimizing him in the pursuit of something which, when found, was utterly worthless. With Karl it was the reverse: he was delighted to hunt for ferns. Nothing suited him so well. It was clear, though he never gave verbal expression to the sentiment, that no occupation within the compass of invention was so entirely to his taste. She could go with him where she could not go with Dave, for Dave could not climb over the roughest places, and she was afraid to go alone. Karl was strong and agile, and could assist her over heights she could not climb by herself; and had she not been too much occupied with other things she would probably have noticed the assiduity with which he searched out such points. Where Dave had dragged his creaking joints laboriously after her, Karl, lithe and agile as a cat,

went before, making a path by parting the thick branches and holding them while she passed. The number of delicate, unobtrusive attentions with which he made shift to pave the ascent or descent was truly marvellous, had she paused to consider it. Here in the woods she found it difficult to maintain the strict relation of mistress and servant. Here was a subtle change of attitude defined by no overt act. Away from his tools, his work, and the dominant thought of servitude, Karl was again a handsome vagabond, who might be a prince in disguise. The servile manner so rigidly observed in the presence of others, here gave place to a knightly courtesy, tinged at times with a boyish audacity that was never pushed to a point where she could afford to resent it. He seemed to know the exact point at which to pause or

change his manner. His tact, his facility in retreat, amounted to genius. Her face was an open page, which he read with unfailing accuracy, and he was duly heedful of its signals.

She was a well-balanced, self-reliant girl, but there were moments in which she felt that he had her at a disadvantage, when she suspected that his soul was not as guileless as his face, that his arts were many and were deep. They certainly were the more seductive for that infantile imperfection of speech. There were times when the arbitrary convention that separated them seemed flimsier than cobweb, lighter than thistledown; and she felt that, if he chose to whistle it down the wind, she would be powerless to preserve it. She was too clear-headed not to realize the heightened zest, the exhilaration,

with which Karl's presence invested these rambles; and she had no sooner admitted it to herself than she began to beat up a reason. She found one, and it was not only very simple but perfectly satisfactory: it was because Karl was so much more active and willing than Dave, and with him she could go to so many places inaccessible to her before.

V.

THE gardener and Schneider were the only white hands on the place. When the latter first came they did not know just what to do with him. He could not of course lodge in the Colonel's house, though it was ample and almost empty. He was finally bestowed in the "fur cabin," the last of the line of low log rooms that had served as negro quarters in slave time. The local prejudice in favor of a white skin had obtained for him some concessions in the shape of additional furniture, and Meriky, the house girl, had been told that she was to look after the room; but from the time of his moving in, nobody at the house had given a

thought to Schneider or his lodging ; and Meriky, with the supreme disdain of her race for "po' white trash," ignored the order without scruple, affirming with many scornful sniffs and tosses that she "wan't gwine to wait on no white nigga."

One afternoon, about two weeks after the arrival of Karl, Lydia chanced to pass by the cabin, the door of which was open. The bed was unmade, the floor unswept, and the room had a shocking appearance of squalor and untidiness.

"I declare it's a shame ; Meriky ought to ten' to this cabin ; an' she must," said Lydia, mortified by the knowledge that any white person had been so lodged on her father's place.

As she passed the window she saw two books lying on the table near it. The text was German, but she could see that it

was verse, and could make out on the respective title-pages the names of Heine and Goethe. There was no name on the fly-leaves to indicate the ownership, but she was sure they were Karl's. She picked up one of them, and as she carelessly turned it over a bunch of violets tied with a blade of grass dropped out.

It had not before occurred to her that Schneider suffered any indignity in being thus bestowed; even now she thought that, with a thorough overhauling, the place might be made habitable for him: but she felt that his countryman was entitled to something better, and she was inspired with a bold resolve to move him into the room over the kitchen, which had never been used for anything and was conveniently accessible by the stairway leading up from the back porch.

That afternoon she marshalled three negro women into the large, low-ceiled, barn-like room over the kitchen, which was speedily swept, scoured, and furnished with articles excavated from the lumber room. A splendid mahogany bedstead with elaborately carved posts towered in one corner; a quaint claw-foot bureau, that like the bedstead had retired before newer fancies in furniture, kept it company; and a washstand was improvised from a rosewood table, whose cracked slab of Egyptian marble had condemned it to banishment in the dim regions of the attic. The collection of odd chairs, the furniture belonging to different periods, the green venetian blinds at the windows, gave the room a bizarre appearance. Lydia thought it looked very much like a lumber room, but it was better than the cabin,

and it was near enough for her to see that Meriky attended to it properly.

That night, as Karl proceeded to move his belongings, consisting of the two books and a small bundle of clothing, from the cabin to the house, Schneider, after looking at him stolidly for a moment, asked, "You vas bromoded, ain'd ud?"

Karl nodded, and as he turned his back on the cabin and crossed the moonlit stretch of lawn that lay between it and the house, Schneider shook his head solemnly, and added, "Somepody elz haf vound you oud already."

The house had two long porches facing east and west, which enabled Lydia to follow the shadow on warm days. The east porch led directly into the garden, and here, through the long afternoons, as she sat with her novel or her embroid-

ery, she could see the gardener at his work, hear him humming softly to himself as he scraped the earthen walks or trimmed the bluegrass borders of the flower-beds. She was often moved to ask him to sing again the song that still haunted her, but she never did, and she could not tell why she did not. In spite of his steady application to work, his growing efficiency, his habitual attitude of deference, he was an embarrassing element. Unaccustomed to the service of white people, she experienced a hesitancy in giving orders that was absent from her intercourse with the negroes. Many services rendered by Dave she could not exact of Karl; and whenever she found herself manœuvring to save him from the more menial offices of his position, she reflected with a twinge of mortification

that she was exhibiting an undue interest in her father's servant. The feeling would have been the same toward any white person in the station her education and prejudices inclined her to regard as the exclusive heritage of the negro. In the case of Karl it was the more pronounced because she had seen him first in the light of an interesting vagabond, bearing himself with the chivalric reverence of a knight-errant. She had at times an uneasy sense of being open to his criticism. She never attempted to sing when he was near; she seldom sang at all. After the mellow resonance of his voice, her own sounded thin and weak. She felt in a vague way that he was capable of comparing her with some standard of which she had no conception, and it annoyed her. She realized to some extent how

far his knowledge of the world, of everything, exceeded her own, and it irritated her beyond measure. She felt, though she did not admit it, that in some respects he was superior to many men she recognized as equals; but the same fine intuition that discovered this superiority showed her that it could not be made apparent to anyone else. As she was the only one of the family who came in contact with him, she was the only one to discover what her father would have been slow to detect in any case—the intangible charm she felt but could not define. The qualities that contributed to it would not commend him to the regard of those around her. To the men of her acquaintance he would not seem more worthy because he loved flowers, read Heine, of whom they knew nothing, sang divinely, and handled the guitar

with inimitable grace. Any one of his accomplishments would be sufficient to condemn him in the eyes of those who would consider them not only trivial, but unmanly, and she was secretly chagrined that she had found them admirable.

Dinner was just over, and Colonel Ransome, on the eve of his second toilet for the day, went first to one window then to another, scanning the premises for a loitering negro, but found none. He called several times, loudly and in rapid succession, but there was no response. "It's come to a pretty pass," he complained, "when a man keeps a whole brigade of black devils round him and can't find one to black his shoes." He came out upon the east porch, and was pacing helplessly up and down, with the shoes in his hand, when Karl came through the garden gate

"Here, Karl," he called, "black my shoes, quick."

Miss Ransome, still in the dining-room, where she was serving the allowance of sugar and butter for the negroes, and putting the remainder safe under lock and key, heard the order, and started as from the stroke of a lash. She went to the kitchen door and found Tom, who had finished his dinner, asleep, with his head in his plate.

"Tom," she called, "come here this minute and black yuh Mahs Wick's shoes."

On her way back to the dining-room she passed Karl, who had already picked up the shoes, and was looking for the blacking in the closet under the stairway.

"Put 'em down," she said, angrily. "You can hitch up the pha'ton, an' I'll go after those ferns this evenin'" (afternoon).

The phaeton was soon ready, and they drove silently down the avenue, across the pike, and into a lane bordered with a close growth of locust and fragrant feathery sprays of elder-bloom. Karl would always remember the avenue as it looked on the day he entered it a beggar—before he had dreamed of the supreme bliss of driving through the shady byways of "God's Country" with the most beautiful woman his eyes had ever beheld. What if she did not know how he adored her? What if she did despise him for his coarse clothes, but most of all for the service to herself, in the rendering of which he found his keenest pleasure? What if the prejudice and bigotry that were hers by inheritance and education kept her blind to the truth? kept her fighting against the influence she felt but could not understand?

What if she saw only the uncouth attire of him whose soul was exhaled before her daily in the priceless incense of a passion that exacted nothing? It could not abate one vibration of the exquisite emotion that thrilled him as he looked out over the green fields, felt the breath of heaven on his face, and revelled in the exhilarating contact of Lydia's dress, or trembled at the light, accidental touch of her arm or shoulder as the vehicle bounded over the uneven road. He knew that in the autumn she was to marry the handsome young fellow whose amiable arrogance he thought detestable; but he did not allow that event to thrust its gaunt shadow into the present, which was his. They drove through a mile of lane and across a field of purple clover, to the bluff that overhung the creek, where they hitched the horse.

Lydia had not spoken since they started, and Karl saw that the wind was in the east, but he did not know why it had shifted. Lydia was in a tempestuous state of mind. Why had she interfered about those shoes? She was beginning to fear that in the shock of surprise at her father's order she had shown more feeling than was necessary or becoming. She wondered if Karl had noticed it, and how he would construe it. As usual, she saw fit to counteract the effect of any trivial kindness she had shown him, by a lofty remoteness of demeanor. She understood the difficulty of carrying out the determination in this particular spot—understood that it would spoil the afternoon for herself as well as for him; but she was none the less resolved. She began by ignoring the path he opened for her as usual, and struck out

in another direction, though the formation of the cliff was such that they could at no point in the descent be more than three feet apart. At the bottom of the precipice the creek unfolded itself like a green ribbon, between white ledges of limestone; and deep down, where perpetual twilight brooded, lay the dim, cool regions of moss and fern. From the midst of the dusky solitude the white arms of a sycamore, now hidden, now revealed, by the waving of boughs, shone like the gleaming limbs of a dryad vanishing coyly at their approach. The thicket was alive with the brush of wings, and vocal with the reed choir of the woods. The place was unspeakably lovely in the green luxuriance of full foliage, but she carried with her a jarring thought that made her indifferent to its beauty. It was probably owing to the

vexation incidental to the inopportune necessity for making herself disagreeable that she walked so absently, and overlooked the grape-vine upon which she tripped. Karl turned, and stayed her with his hand, but they both slipped from the path, borne on by the impetus of her fall. It was impossible to be imposing or lofty to a man who held her suspended over a chasm, and Lydia felt her dignity melting like thin ice. The descent was very abrupt, the mould soft and treacherous, and they could not stand in one place long enough to get an advantageous start. They were still slipping, when Karl caught her with one arm and grasped the limb of a tree with the other hand. For an instant she felt his breath upon her face, and then she was being whirled, carried bodily, down the steep bluff. She was not thinking of the

descent or its perils. She was conscious only of the contact; her head was dizzy and her veins ran fire. It was but an instant. It was like a flash. They reached the bottom with no more serious injury than a few scratches, and lit upon their feet. Lydia was trembling violently, and for her life she could not look at Karl. He stood beside her, thrilling with the remembrance of that embrace, the more delicious because of the danger that attended it. She did not speak, and the face that would have been a revelation to him was hidden by the sun-bonnet. To Lydia the sensation was altogether new, and it was as unfathomable as it was unfamiliar. It seemed in some vague way connected with the strange spell that always settled down upon them at the edge of this sylvan solitude, where the coercive energy of nature

thrust out all arbitrary distinctions and brought her face to face with something feared and yet desired. Karl, uncertain of her mood, was discreetly silent. They worked for an hour in the cool, fragrant dusk of the ravine, with the ribbon of water below and the ribbon of sky above. The longer they kept silent the harder it was to speak; and when at last Karl announced that the baskets were full, his voice sounded unfamiliar to Lydia, but it broke the spell and brought her back to the level of the commonplace. They started home immediately, not tarrying for the usual stroll after the baskets were filled. There were more baskets than Karl could carry at once, and rather than wait to send him back, she took up the smallest one herself.

She found it heavier than she expected, and, when half-way up the cliff, sank on a

ledge to rest. Karl followed her example. The cliff was much lower on the other side of the creek at this point, and the view commanded a wide, sun-flooded plateau, carved into fantastic arabesques by the erratic windings of the Elkhorn. The shadows of flying clouds chased each other over golden billows of wheat and barley and far-reaching fields of dark, luxuriant hemp that broke into a thousand whirling eddies at the touch of every breeze.

A soft, luminous blue mist floated like a gauze streamer along the watercourse, and hovered over the slight depressions in the land; and the deserted log cabin standing in the midst of the stretch of purple clover in the creek bottom looked like some rude craft afloat on a sea of amethyst. The shrill bird chorus was pierced by occasional bursts of song as the ambitious solo

of the mocking-bird rose in a succession of imitative phrases, and joined now and then by the plaintive contralto note of the dove calling across the field behind them. Down at the creek's edge a negro woman was hanging up the weekly wash, and from under the kettles fluttered up the blue, odorous smoke of a wood fire. After it soared a voice powerful, penetrating, and slightly nasal, but not unpleasant, bearing upward the burden of a favorite plantation hymn :

"I'se gwyne home to glory, don't you grieve arter
me,
I'se gwyne home to glory, don't you grieve arter
me,
I'se gwyne home to glory, don't you grieve arter
me,
'Ca'se I do' want you to grieve arter me."

She sang with power and earnestness, and no combination of intervals could

convey an adequate impression of her treatment of that final "me," which she prolonged indefinitely, ornamented with innumerable shakes and appoggiaturas, held aloft in a piercing tremulo, and finally, when breath was exhausted, heaved upward with a jerk.

A light breeze blew over them, bringing with it the clean, strong, penetrating smell of hemp. Karl took off his hat and drew in a deep breath.

"You are right to call it God's country," he said. "It is beautiful; it is like Paradise."

Lydia had taken off the sun-bonnet to which he so objected, and was fanning herself with it vigorously. Her eyes were fixed on a distant point in the landscape, and her face was stamped with the apathetic calm of a reactive mood.

Karl scanned it intently, but for ~~once~~ could ~~make~~ nothing of it. It neither encouraged nor repelled him.

Presently he said in an absent way, as if to nobody in particular, "I am glad I found God's country. Dis is de happies' summer I did effer know."

Lydia turned, and looked down at him curiously. He was lying on his back looking up at the strip of sky, and his eyes reflected its deep, luminous blue. His face wore that bland and guileless expression so impossible to construe with certainty. Was he joking? If this was the happiest summer he had ever known, what must his life have been? His visible vestments were a shirt of unbleached cotton, a pair of blue-cotton trousers, coarse but clean, and a pair of calfskin shoes. How could anybody be happy like that? If this was

happiness, she was more curious than ever to know what his life had been. She was moved to ask him a question that had long been at the tip of her tongue :

"What did you do in your own country?"

Karl replied that, when not wandering about, he had been in the army.

Her eyes brightened : if he had been a soldier, that was not so bad.

"Did you like being in the army?"

"No," he answered, simply, "de discipline is ve'y strict."

"How came you to join the army?"

He replied that every man in his country had to serve a certain length of time, whether he liked it or not.

There had always been lurking in her mind a suspicion that in his own country his position had been different from what

it was here. He certainly was not like Schneider, and she had fancied that at home he might at least have been a gentleman; but as he answered her questions the last vestige of the illusion she had entertained vanished like a faint odor in a gale. If this was the happiest summer he had ever known, he could not have been any better off in his own country; and the man who was not a fighter from instinct and a soldier from choice was less than a man to her. How could he prefer this to being in the army? He had probably deserted; that was why he was an exile. Never again would she find a peg upon which to hang a romantic possibility. She looked down upon him as he lay there gazing up into the sky; and he was so pitifully content, so egregiously happy, that she hated him. She turned impatiently away

from a spectacle so irritating, and leaned over the ledge to look into the chasm. Half-way down the side of the cliff, which was almost perpendicular, some pale-blue flowers waved from a crevice in the rock. She had never seen any like them before, though she had been so often to the place, and they roused the interest that nothing else could have stimulated at that moment.

"Look there!" she exclaimed, impulsively; "I wonder what they are like when you get close to 'em? What a pity they are jus' where we can't get at 'em from above or below!"

From the point where they sat to the bed of the creek was a sheer drop of seventy-five feet, and the cliff, though covered with a scant vegetation that found a foothold in the crevices of rock, was too nearly straight to climb; and the flowers, inacces-

sible from any direction, nodded gayly in exasperating security.

"I do wish I had some of 'em," said Lydia, earnestly, the more eager because they were so entirely out of reach.

Karl leaned over the edge. "Dose blue ones?" he asked.

"Yes, with the long stems. Ain't they lovely?"

He reached out and caught the top of a supple young sapling that grew in a crevice below them, and before she had finished the question he had swung himself over the ledge.

The drop almost took her breath. With bloodless face she leaned over the edge, straining her eyes for a glimpse of him. In a second the sapling came whizzing back to its place, lashing the intervening brush tremendously, almost striking her in the

face. Below there was a similar snapping of branches that filled her with terror. With the fascination of horror, she leaned over and looked again. Far below she saw him swinging by a limb, working himself back and forth toward the cranny from which the flowers seemed to beckon derisively. The first time he did not reach them by two feet; the next time he got nearer; the third time he touched the rock but missed the prize, and Lydia, straining her eyes through the brush, could see that the root of the young tree by which he swung was yielding. He did not see the danger, and she could not call to him, she was so paralyzed with fear. He was swinging toward the rock for the fourth time—but she could look no longer. She drew back and listened breathlessly for what seemed an age. Deep in the ravine she

heard a pheasant drumming; the dove called across the wood; the negro woman at the creek's edge rang out the vociferous "Don't you grieve arter me," which all at once seemed to take on a sinister meaning—and then the crash came.

She turned suddenly cold and sick, and a black curtain fell between her and the landscape.

Meanwhile Karl, who had in the nick of time seized another sapling, and thus achieved a safe but precipitous descent, was leisurely climbing back to the top. Several minutes elapsed while Lydia lay pale and unconscious; then the cool wind blowing on her face revived her. She sat up feebly, and was just beginning to remember why she had fainted, and that in the ravine below lay the mangled remains of Karl, when she looked up and saw him

so close to her that she could have touched him. The transition from sickening terror to infinite relief, to something more than relief, was so sudden and so violent that Karl was thrilled by both in the same instant. The deadly fear, the joyful light that burned in her eyes a moment later, were alike for him. His own face reflected the glow of hers ; it shone with a new light, eager, intense. For a moment they looked at each other ; then he asked, "Were you frightened?"

The question came softly and with just the touch of tenderness sufficient to betray his thought. Her face changed instantly.

"It was enough to frighten anybody," she replied. "And what a perfec'ly ridiculous thing it was to do!"

He held out the blue flowers mutely and with a penitent face.

She hesitated a moment, then took them and stuck them carelessly in her belt. He was safe now and she could afford to be rigorous.

On the way home she sat up rigidly in the phaeton and did not speak to him, and bitterly resented the fact that Karl, though silent and thoughtful, seemed oblivious of her displeasure.

That night in the room over the kitchen a young man, with head bared to the caress of the fragrant summer breeze, leaned out of the small square window into the moonlight and hummed snatches of a melody in the intervals of a fragmentary soliloquy. "Her face was glorious," he was saying. "She loves me and she despises herself. She will be very haughty, very grand, now for a long time. It is curious, dis pride, dis grand air. In dis

country dey say all people are de same, but it is not so. Because I wear dese clothes and dig in her garden, she despises me. It is very funny, dese Americans. I might despise her, but I don't. But I hate him. He 'ink de world was made for him. He is a conceited jackanape."

In the white-curtained room at the front of the house sat Lydia, rocking vigorously, looking out upon the moonlit garden, glancing occasionally at the window at the end of the porch, upon the sill of which she thought a head rested. She too was thinking of the incident of the afternoon. She was unable to guess how Karl had managed to reach the bottom of the cliff alive, but she would not have betrayed so much interest as would be involved in direct inquiry. She remembered how his face looked as it lit up suddenly with that eager

How. How dare he look at her like that? How soft his voice was, how full of tender concern, as he asked if she were frightened! "What impudence!" And that mad dash over the cliff! No other man she knew could or would have done it. It reminded her of that old legend of the knight, the lions, and the lady's glove. It certainly was absurd. It was impertinent, if she chose to so consider it; but it was deliciously reckless, and it was flattering to the point of intoxication. She had proceeded to crush him instantly, as she always did when he presumed; but in the present instance there was an annoying sense of incompleteness. She feared that this time she had not done it effectively. She flushed as she recalled that headlong rush they had taken down the bluff, and the sensation that accompanied it, deli-

cious and yet full of vague terror ; and a thrill that was like the echo of it passed over her. The odorous wind that came in from the garden bore to her fragments of a plaintive melody, and presently, for no reason that she could assign, her head drooped upon the high, old-fashioned sill of the window and she began to cry softly.

VI.

A NOTED Kentucky turfman who late in life sought refuge in the bosom of the Church was frequently heard to remark, with the moisture of deep feeling in his eyes, that he confidently expected to run his favorite thoroughbred in the green pastures of the hereafter. It is not improbable that the indifference of his class to the consolations of religion and the promises of a future life is due to the absence of the simple faith upon which the General's blissful anticipation reposed. Were heaven an interminable boulevard, and the transportation of horses assured, no Kentuckian would miss it, though convinced that it lay through a prohibition district.

Other men own horses, drive them, admire their beauty, glory in their speed; but nowhere outside of an Arabian legend is a horse the object of so much affectionate solicitude, so nearly a part of its owner's being, as in Kentucky. A Kentuckian may be conceived of without his title; he may exist without an imposing pedigree; a bold flight of the imagination may even picture him without his morning toddy;—but without his horse he is impossible. The buggy is the vehicle with which he is inseparably identified. "Buggy-riding" is his chief amusement. The buggy is to him at the same time what the gondola is to the Venetian, and the guitar to the Spaniard—the chief means of locomotion and the prime promoter of his love affairs. It is the object about which all the tender and romantic associations of the country cling;

the supreme opportunity of lovers—the resort in which two souls, under fairly favorable conditions, are speedily reduced to the elementary substance of a single thought. Its advantages can only be fully appreciated by those who have enjoyed them; but the security from intrusion, which is one of them, will be readily appreciated by the most obtuse. To the sense of possession induced by the nearness of the beloved object and the absence of other people is added that keen exhilaration that comes of rapid motion without effort, when one seems to cleave the air as with the wings of a bird. The lover who possesses a horse and buggy does not sigh for the wings of a dove, and the one who does not is practically out of the race if his rival is fully equipped. Whether he is speeding like a shaft along the smooth,

white turnpike in the sunlit glory of a perfect day, cutting the mellow radiance of a moonlit night, or loitering idly through some flowery lane in the warm, odorous twilight of a summer evening, employing the interval as fate or feeling may dictate, he is equally blessed. He has with him at the same moment the two things dearest on earth, without which heaven is void of attraction—his sweetheart and his horse.

It was the first week in July, and the afternoon, though breezy, was hot. Lydia had an engagement to drive, or, as she would have phrased it, "to ride," with Beverly, who a few days before had matched the bay trotter that had been for some time his especial pride. The drive, which was a formal dedication of the new possession to the divinity he adored, was the last they would take together for a considerable

time, for, as Beverly frequently declared with an air of outraged proprietorship, he "never got to look at Lyd after the guests arrived."

At the appointed hour he came spinning down the avenue, the flawless varnish of his buggy reflecting the sunlight from a million angles at once. Three negroes idling in the stable lot turned at the sound of wheels, and, recognizing Beverly, engaged in a frantic foot-race for the privilege of holding the horses, with an eye to the tip that would be forthcoming at the end of the vigil. Beverly, resplendent in a pair of white marseilles trousers that fitted like the fresco to a ceiling, a vest of the same material cut low enough to expose three diamond studs, a white cravat, a dark cloth coat, and a soft felt hat of a light color, sprang out of the vehicle and walked into

the house with the manner of one quite at home. In the hall he met Meriky.

"Meriky, go see if yuh Miss Lyd's ready," he ordered, and than went out on the porch to wait. In a few minutes the Colonel came around the corner of the house, blowing from the fatigue of a short walk. He wore a suit of ecru linen minus the coat, freshly laundered and stiffly starched, and a broad-brimmed panama hat of the finest braid. As he edged into the shadow he took off his hat and mopped out the lining with a flowered silk handkerchief, which he returned to the bosom of his waistcoat.

"Hello, Bev."

"Good evenin', Kunnel."

"Whew, but it's hot!" exclaimed the Colonel, as he came up the steps. "Is that yuh new trotter?" he asked, as the two shook hands.

"Yes," replied Beverly; "don't you think it's a splendid match?"

"Yes, it is. I can't tell which is ~~which~~ from here. I'll go an' take a look at 'em d'rectly. My stars! but I'm tired," he groaned, as he sank into a chair.

"Where've you been?" asked Bev.

"I've been to the creek pahsture to look at a filly that got hurt yesterday, an' I'm about used up."

Outside a community laboring under the delusion that a man cannot move on less than four feet, it would have appeared that the Colonel's weariness was absurdly out of proportion to his exertion; but they were men of one mind, and Bev merely inquired whether there was anything the matter with the gray mare.

Meriky now appeared with the message that Miss Liddy would be ready in a minute.

"Have a julip while you are waitin,' Bev?" asked Colonel.

"B'lieve I will, Kunnel."

Colonel Ransome walked to the end of the porch, near which a dark mass of rags and glistening black limbs was tumbling about on the grass.

"Mose! Elic! Gabe!" he called, in quick succession.

At the sound of his voice the shapeless mass was instantly resolved into three small negroes, who sprang up and came toward him with that cunning assumption of awe that is one of the many wiles of the race.

"Mose, you black vilyun, run to the branch an' get some mint quick."

Mose started off at a tangent, his bare black legs revolving around his diminutive person like spokes around the hub of a wheel.

"Gabe, you go tell Meriky to bring some cracked ice an' some glasses." Gabe flew in another direction.

"Elic, run that chicken out yuh Miss Lyddy's flower-bed, an' then go back to the cabin where you b'long. I'll whale the life out o' you black devils if you don't keep off my grass."

Elic sped after the chicken unimpressed by a threat so remote, indefinite, and altogether doubtful of fulfilment.

"The varments are as thick on this place as toadstools after a rain," said the Colonel, coming back to his chair. "It's worse 'n slave-time. I'll swear I do' know where they come from."

"The worst of it is," remarked Bev, "they eat just as much as the grown ones, and they are no earthly account."

"Well, I don't begrudge any of 'em

what they can hold ; but it does rile me to see them that's old enough eat my victuals all the year roun' an' then vote the Republican ticket every chance they get."

"It ain't what they eat as much as what they steal, that aggravates me. If you want to eat spring chicken you've got to set under the hen-roost all night with a shot-gun ; an' you just can't keep a water-melon ; I've given that up. I'd rather buy what I want than bother with keepin' the niggers out of the patch. As far as the votin's concerned, I s'pose it is only natural they should vote with the party that freed 'em ; but it's tough on us."

"What's their freedom wuth to 'em?" queried the Colonel, explosively. "They are a million times wuss' off—a million times raggeder, dirtier, lazier than they've ever been since the first ship-load of the

damned war-breedin' devils was landed at Jamestown. Freedom!" finished the Colonel, in a burst of bitterness.

"I know," replied Bev, soothingly, "but they can't see it that way. They can steal as much as they want now without gettin' thrashed, an' that's wuth a good deal to 'em. Their bein' free wouldn't make so much difference after all if we could only get rid of 'em an' forget how it was done."

"Don't, Bev," said the Colonel, reddening, "don't get me started on that to-day; it's too hot."

Here Meriky appeared with the waiter containing the ice and the glasses, and a moment later the penetrating odor of bruised mint heralded the approach of Mose. The Colonel took a bunch of keys from his trousers pocket, and produced from the long, narrow closet in the dining-

room a cut-glass decanter half full of an amber-brown liquid that ran like oil. Beverly was full of fresh turf gossip, which he reeled off gayly for the Colonel's entertainment as they sipped their julep.

When the elastic feminine minute had stretched to half an hour, Lydia appeared on the porch in a dress of white muslin, soft and voluminous of drapery, with a superabundance of sash that, as she moved, rose and floated behind her like a cloud. The leghorn hat with brim fantastically bent, framed her face picturesquely. The crown of it was lost in vaporous wreaths of tulle, and over the brim fell a streamer of the same material that encircled her pearly throat and dropped forward over the cluster of Jacqueminot roses that burned against her breast, veiling them daintily as with a mist of dew. With her

complexion, without the roses the toilet would have been cold and meaningless; with that dash of color, softened by the film of tulle, it was radiant and warm with life. That last touch embodied the poetic inspiration of an acutely feminine temperament that marks the distinction between mere clothes and a sentiment expressed in fabrics.

The effect upon Bev was simply stunning. It seemed that a cool, fleecy cloud had floated down to his feet from some region of perpetual snow—a cloud penetrated by one palpitating, rosy gleam, from the midst of which looked out at him the fairest, freshest, brightest face he had ever seen. There was more intoxication in one glance of her gold-brown eyes than was imprisoned in an entire bonded warehouse. The impulse to gather her into a quick,

crushing hug was so sudden and so overpowering that it was barely quelled by the presence of the Colonel. It subsided ultimately into a consuming desire to melt into a tulle streamer.

"Have some, Lyd?" asked her father, referring to the contents of the decanter.

"It's mos' too hot for julip," replied Lydia, "but you may gi' me a little with lots o' ice an' plenty o' sugah."

Beverly set down his own glass and proceeded to mix the tippie according to directions.

When the glasses were emptied, all three sauntered down to the gate, where Bev's purchase was minutely examined and exhaustively discussed in the technical language of the turf. Then Bev assisted Lydia into the shining vehicle, mounted after her, and took up the reins with that

rapturous enthusiasm a Kentuckian only feels behind a pair of flyers he believes can beat anything on the road. The horses, satin-coated, clean-limbed, bright-eyed, groomed to the most exquisite polish, and proudly conscious of their owner's pride in them, stepped out daintily, disdaining the earth, curveting coquettishly until the firm hand on the rein brought them down to a steady, even trot that quickened until team, vehicle, the two figures, the dangling legs of the small darky that had caught on behind to open the gate melted into a single winged thing that seemed to skim the elastic turf of the avenue with the speed of a swallow. The top was down, and as the buggy rolled out into the road its course was marked by Lydia's red parasol waving aloft like a gigantic poppy.

"Bev will split the pike wide open this evenin'," remarked the Colonel, with a sympathetic gaze after the vanishing equipage.

Bev settled his hat on his head and with the merest tap of the whip urged the horses to their best, and for five minutes sat behind them in a speechless ecstasy of realization. Then he turned and looked at Lyd. She was watching the horses with a delight as keen as his own, her face lit with the fine glow of exhilaration induced by the fresh air and rapid motion. He slackened speed, and for a moment seemed to drink her with his eyes, then, darting a quick look fore and aft, seized the handle of the red parasol and executed an adroit manœuvre.

"Ah!" he exclaimed, with a long exhalation.

"Ain't you ashamed o' yourself, Bev, right here on the pike?" demanded Miss Ransome, with a creditable show of disapproval, instinctively repeating the look fore and aft with which Bev had preluded his *coup*.

A laugh—a deep gurgle of intense satisfaction—was the only reply to the rebuke.

"I couldn't help it, Lyd," he said, presently, with a weak attempt to appear subdued; "it's such a lingering eternity till October. Does it seem long to you, Lyd? Say yes," he urged, with a spasmodic pressure of the hand that lay in her lap and a futile attempt to circumvent the hat brim.

"On the contrary, it seems very short," replied Lydia; "and there is such a lot to do."

"Why should there be such a lot to do? I never could see the use of a woman's

buying out creation, and making it up into frillfralls before she is married, just as if she never expected to get anything afterwards."

"Perhaps," replied Miss Ransome, loftily, "it's because the men make such a fuss about the bills when they do come in. There's a tradition to the effec' that you can't tell anything about what a man's goin' to do aftah marriage by the way he has behaved befoah."

"That's a base libel on the sex, Lyd, an' you know it," returned Bev, with imperturbable complaisance. "You know," he went on, "there is always a great deal of unnecessary parade about a weddin'. Of course the fuss an' flowers an' the frills are a' right for a woman; she looks perfectly natural in the midst of 'em, an' she enjoys it: but it bores a man to death, an' he

looks so egregiously idiotic an' out of place. I nevah see a po' devil goin' through the martyrdom of a big weddin' that I don't feel like beatin' up a mob an' goin' to the rescue. An' I b'lieve all men feel about it just as I do."

"I s'pose they do," returned Lydia. "A man is so use' to bein' first in everything, he natchally dislikes a situation in which he is not the mos' conspicyus fig-yah."

"There is only one woman in the world who could inveigle me into goin' through with it," remarked Bev, impressively, with another feint at the parasol handle, which was deftly eluded by Lydia.

VII.

OTHER eyes than those of the Colonel watched Beverly's buggy sweeping along the avenue, but with an expression the reverse of sympathetic. They were the eyes of Karl, who happened at the time to be crossing the lawn. He leaned upon the handle of his rake and looked after it until it turned into the road, and a moment later he saw the Colonel mount his horse and ride away.

He had known from the first that Lydia was a forbidden joy to him, but the sense of her remoteness never oppressed him as it did now. He had watched her sauntering toward the gate, and thought he had never seen her look so beautiful. The

spectacle stirred him like the swell of a majestic cadence. His heart was full of bitterness, and the emotion hitherto fairly controlled rose and swept over him in a tempest of wrathful, unreasoning jealousy. He hated the arrogant young fellow who, from the height of undisputed possession, looked down upon him in contemptuous security. As he turned back toward the garden he remembered that the house was empty. Lydia and her father would not return until late; the negro women, the only persons who had any business at the house, were at the cabin, most probably asleep. He went to one of the parlor windows that looked upon the garden, and after one or two attempts succeeded in prying open the shutter. He put his head into the room and listened. The house was as silent as a tomb. He climbed in

and sat down at the piano. How long it had been since he had touched one ! His fingers, stiffened by manual labor, were at first refractory, and the things he had known came to him only in fragments. A few massive chords from the "Pilgrims' Chorus," the ethereal song of the Rhine daughters, a few measures of a nocturne, a fragment of the Sonata Pathétique. He wandered aimlessly from theme to theme, from opera to opera. The things he most loved came back to him gradually, and he played on, taking no note of time. He forgot his uncouth attire, his aristocratic rival ; forgot even the despair that had sent him to the piano for consolation ; forgot everything but the heart within him throbbing with tumultuous passion, and the instrument through which it found expression. It spoke for him in divine melody,

in tempestuous chords, as no feeble verbiage could speak; and as the afternoon wore on he sat there with flushed face and humid eyes, pouring his soul out in the old-fashioned parlor with its lofty ceiling, dim and cool as a cloister.

The buggy came back along the avenue in the fragrant twilight of the summer evening and deposited a portion of its burden at Colonel Ransome's gate.

"Won't you come in, Bev, and have supper?" Lydia asked, as he handed her down.

"No, thank you, Lyd, not to-night. I brought Claude Graves out from town with me, an' I mus' go back and keep him company."

He broke a rose from the cluster she wore and stuck it in his button-hole before climbing back to his seat. Lydia stood

looking after him a moment as the buggy rolled away.

"Bev looked perfec'tly stunnin' this evenin'," she said. The thought in her mind was that he had not been particularly entertaining, and that in spite of the excitement of the new horse the drive had been tiresome. She was in a mood to resent the air of proprietorship Bev had recently begun to assume. He was entirely too confident; it was almost as if she were married. As she walked slowly toward the house she wished there had never been a mortgage, or at least that Bev had not come between her father and bankruptcy. If anything should happen that she did not marry him the obligation would be awkward. There was nothing to happen, of course. She had always intended marrying him; she would have married him if

there had been no mortgage; but for the last few days her father's obligation to Bev had haunted, harassed her, and this was the more singular, since up to that time it had not disturbed her any more than if she had been unaware of its existence. She was weighed down by a mental depression wholly unaccounted for. It was the first pull on the tether that until now she had not felt. When she got into the house she thought she heard the piano. She went to the parlor door and looked in. Seated at the instrument was Karl, oblivious of everything but the sounds he conjured from it. The window through which he had entered was still open, and the light of the moon just rising streamed over him. She had always been keenly alive to the refined beauty of his face, but she had never seen it as she saw it now. He was

playing Chopin's nocturne in G major. She did not know what it was, but the beautiful rippling effect of the successive thirds and sixths with which it opens reminded her one moment of the splash and flow of water, the next, as it sank to the faintest pianissimo, of the leaves gossiping in soft whispers overhead. Then came the exquisite melody of the second movement, with the long note in the bass that was like the dip of an oar. Piano first, then forte, dying away again to an echo, as if a boatman had passed singing in the moonlight, and the leaves murmured, and the stream rippled on. Karl's back was toward the door, and he had not seen her enter. She approached softly and sank into an arm-chair near the piano. He paused only for a moment. This time it was the funeral march from the first

sonata. The heavy alternating chords in the bass were like the rhythmic tramp of armed men. The opening measure was a knell, and then the funeral chant, heavy with anguish, rose like the wail of a nation mourning its last hope. The sobbing chords of the minor harmony freighted with the tragedy, the heartbreak of a thousand defeats, wrung her, weighed her down as with the agony of a personal grief. Then out of the tumult and anguish of the chant the heavenly melody of the trio soared like the prayer of faith. It was her misfortune at that moment that she possessed the rare faculty of instantly recognizing beauty, whether expressed in form or sound. For an ear naturally acute, the sublime harmonies of Chopin needed no interpreter; to a temperament peculiarly susceptible, that majestic epic of deso-

lation was a new language. She had learned music as other girls she knew had learned it, after the manner of boarding-schools, and her knowledge was confined to the flashy and frivolous dances, the sentimental themes with variations on a level with the understanding of those who regard it as an accomplishment and nothing more. She had never dreamed that it was a language capable of conveying the most vivid impressions, of embodying the whole range of emotion from the delicate, ethereal tenderness of a dream of love, to the despairing wail of a nation borne down by the anguish of ultimate defeat. She could not analyze the impressions she received, she could only feel with the intensity of a finely sensitive organism. She ached as with the pang of unutterable grief. The trio died away and the wail rose again. Her head

drooped against the back of the chair, and the tears fell rapidly on the hands folded in her lap. When the last heavy note of agony died away, she felt that she could not have endured another measure. Karl sat for a moment irresolute, then his fingers again sought the keys, running over them in rippling arpeggios, and then he began to sing, to a subdued accompaniment, Rubinstein's air to Heine's lyric, "Thou art so like a flower." He sang in German, and she could not understand it, but she knew he was singing of her, and the last strain of the song was like a benediction. When he had finished he turned slowly round upon the stool and saw the white garmented figure in the chair, just beyond the oblique square of moonlight that lay upon the floor.

Was it an apparition conjured by his

own intense desire? He sprang toward it with a quick, joyful cry. It was no shadow. The hand within his own was warm, and its pulse quickened at his touch; the eyes returned his gaze with a fixed intensity. As Karl knelt beside her chair, his figure was obscure in the gloom of the room. Lydia saw only his face, as he leaned into the moonlight, approaching her slowly but steadily. She knew it was the gardener who knelt there; she was acutely sensible of the guilt and humiliation of the moment, but she could not stir. She was seized with a sudden terror as of a force imminent, unmeasured, as the face drew slowly nearer, the eyes burning with a soul-compelling passion whose prayer was destiny. It seemed strange to her that will as well as strength had failed. It was her wonder and her humiliation that

there was not even a desire to escape. It was like a dream in which life seems to hang upon flight, and flight is impossible. The face came nearer. She knew what would happen; she felt the disgrace of it; she was curiously occupied with the sudden failure of volition, and the equally sudden birth of that mysterious impulse within her which, in spite of her terror at what it involved, yearned toward him with strange, impatient expectancy. At last she felt his breath upon her hair, his lips upon her own. The room reeled, and chaos was come. With an eager, impetuous movement Karl gathered her in his arms, buried his face in the soft folds of illusion and the cool fragrance of the roses on her breast, and for one delicious moment exulted, revelled like a bee at the heart of a flower. It was but an instant. There

was a step in the hall, and with another hurried pressure of the lips, Karl vanished through the open window, crushing a rose in his hand.

The step was Mericky's. She was coming to tell Lydia that her father had returned and supper was ready. Lydia paid no attention to the summons. When the girl had gone, she rose with the semi-consciousness of one hypnotized, and went up-stairs. She locked the door, threw her hat on the bed, and sat down in the rocker by the window.

"Ich sterbe für dich," he had said, as his head sank on her breast; and the impassioned energy of the utterance was an adequate translation of the sentiment.

What was the breezy confidence of Bev's wooing to that heart-wringing supplication?

There was no light in the room, but by

her chair there lay an oblique square of moonlight like the one that fell at her feet in the parlor. She fancied she could almost see the kneeling figure of Karl leaning toward her. She closed her eyes and saw again the glowing face approaching her through the dusk; felt the breath upon her hair, the touch upon her lips; and at the thought, as at the touch, a wave of exquisite emotion swept over her, a surging fire filled her veins. When she opened her eyes the image vanished, the sensation was dissipated. Again and again she retraced each moment of the time from her entrance to the disappearance of Karl;—how he looked when she went in, sitting there with the moonlight streaming over his face, that shone with a new and startling radiance; the soft murmur of the nocturne, the fainting diminuendo of the

gondolied, the sobbing harmony of the dirge, the ethereal strains of the trio, that melodious benediction that was like the "Peace be with you" of an angel; the kneeling figure, the eyes burning through the dusk, the face coming nearer, the strange quiescence that held her, and then that tumultuous crescendo of emotion that was at once an awakening and a revelation. Again and again she realized it in all its original vividness and intensity. That mysterious force with which his touch had charged her swept up in successive waves of new, delicious life; she swam in a sea of delight, across which the sublime strains of the march, the soothing ripple of the nocturne, floated like the echo of an echo as she lived again the delirious ecstasy of supreme surrender. By-and-by the sensation became less and less vivid

with each return, until it eluded her altogether, and the fevered mood was succeeded by a cold stupor.

The moon that was just above the tree-tops when she went up-stairs, swept over and dipped to westward. The dense shadow that lay upon the garden retreated before it, and in the windless night each shrub and leaf was sharply etched upon the white wall of the house. The moon went down; the breeze blew fresh in the starry dusk between night and day; dusk paled to dawn; the east caught fire, and its glow suffused the room and its listless occupant. A blue spiral of smoke rose from the chimney at the end of the L, and from the same quarter came the regular, ponderous stroke of the rolling-pin with which Cynthia was beating the biscuit for breakfast. Between the strokes the

strains of a hymn rose with all the paucity of sentiment and monotony of melody that distinguish the negro song. A procession of negroes passed under the window, singing on their way to the field; then Meriky came to call Lydia. She got up now to change her dress for something more suitable for an appearance at breakfast. The sun was high; her father, impatient for his morning meal, walked up and down the porch, whistling "The Bonny Blue Flag," and Karl was hoeing in the garden. It seemed to her that the entire solar system had been on a stupendous drunk the night before, reeling through space at a reckless rate. It was strange to see it moving on in the same old way this morning; strangest of all to see Karl hoeing placidly, as if the shell of a new world had not cracked twelve hours before.

VIII.

THE day was full of bustle and preparation. The friends who for the last two months had visited them in occasional showers were to settle the next week in a steady inundation. Some of them were to arrive the following day; and Lydia, while occupied with preparations for their reception, was intently engaged on the problem which Karl's recent audacity had presented for solution. What to do with him after that, was the question. She felt that the only safe thing to do was to send him away immediately. But here a difficulty arose: she had so often praised his efficiency and his willingness to her father that, if she attempted to urge his dismissal,

some very excellent reason must be forthcoming, and there was none at hand. The real one was not to be dreamed of for a moment as the one to be advanced; and though the day was spent in painful stress of thought, night left her where the morning had found her—wholly at sea. In the midst of her confusion and distress she was secretly pleased that she had failed to find a plausible reason for recommending his discharge. She did not see Karl that day. She allowed him to cut the flowers to fill the vases, a thing he had never done before, and she did not go near the garden.

The summer to which she had looked forward with such keen zest palled upon her suddenly. She wished wearily that there were some means of escape from the duties and responsibilities that had

hitherto been a pleasure to her. The next moment she looked forward eagerly to the arrival of the guests as to something that was to relieve her from herself, and distract her from that harrowing self-examination. She could come to no decision in regard to Karl, and she finally turned away from the subject from sheer weariness. The advance party of guests arrived and took possession of the Colonel's premises. The dim upper chambers, so long empty, rang with gay gossip and idle mirth. In a week the house was full, and when these were gone there were others to come. The day was full of rides and drives, of savory feasts and odorous juleps, of excursions to the river, of visits in the neighborhood, of croquet and luscious luncheons of water-melon eaten on the grass under the trees; of love-making, of idle gallantry, of

turf gossip and poker; of juicy jest and spicy story that flowed with the after-dinner wine; of girls, youthful, sparkling with animation, blooming in the thinnest, most ethereal, and gayest of gay toilets; and of men, young, middle-aged, or elderly, who were chiefly engaged in making life interesting to them. At night there was dancing in the parlor, that looked as if it might have been built for the ball-room of a summer resort; moonlight drives, more water-melons, more juleps, and more poker. Dave with his fiddle, and Tom with a banjo that bore but slight resemblance to the dapper instrument that has been adopted by polite society, furnished music for the dance. The banjo was made of the rim of a discarded sifter, fitted with a rude neck guiltless of frets, and usually strung with horse-hair, but Tom succeeded

in getting a marvellous amount of sound out of it that was not unmusical. Late into the night the smallest of feet in the most absurdly high heels and the most acutely pointed of toes pattered to the strains of "Captain Jinks" or "Dixie," none the less inspiring as a dance tune because it had borne so many brave men to their death.

For the round-dances the girls took turns at the piano, and the rollicking measures of the quadrille were superseded by the "Blue Danube," "Lauderbach," and "Champagne Charley." This was a trifle laborious, besides depriving the girl who played of the pleasure of dancing. It occurred to Lydia one evening to ask Karl to play for them. He replied with a disdainful wave of his hand toward the parlor:

"For you I vill do anyding, for dem I

vill do notting;" and the girls continued to take turns.

The older men and those who did not dance found amusement equally to their taste. The wide hall, open at both ends to the breeze, was filled with tables, about which they gathered; and here the unfailing stream of turf talk flowed on, interrupted only by the clink of crushed ice and the rattle of poker chips. The wind, sweeping over the dewy flower-beds, came in moist and fragrant, mingling the delightful odors of the garden with the scent of mint. Round every hammock and rustic seat on the lawn floated a pale mist of muslin, and near it hovered the dark silhouette, whose proximity added the touch of sentiment that completed the picture. Out in the starlit dusk of the garden or in the dim shadows of the porch above stood

Karl, watching the crowd through the open window, chafing at the spectacle of Lydia floating, unmindful of him and his aching heart, through the mazy revel of the quadrille or the whirling eddies of the waltz.

In August came the World's Fair, which nobody thought of missing. Not a fair, strictly speaking, but a horse show, at which some of the finest blooded stock in the State was exhibited. The World's Fair, with its incomparable burgoo, the lavish abundance of its dinners eaten under the trees, where the Kentuckian met everybody he had ever known, and the stranger was told he could feast his eyes on the daintiest specimens of horse-flesh and the loveliest gathering of women he was ever likely to encounter; where one could sample the native beverage in its purity, and dine off a saddle of mutton that would

haunt him ever after as one of the tenderest memories of his life.

The season waxed and waned. From July until the middle of October—for the country was more delightful in autumn than in summer—the gay, convivial life flowed on. For the first time since she had entered upon it, Lydia was not absorbed by it. Instead of bearing her with it as before, it seemed to float by her like a panorama. She was living two lives—the one open, gay, imperious, full of the homage of an admiring throng, and the small concerns of every-day life; the other secret, deep, intense, jealously guarded from the world about her and from the too strict scrutiny of her own conscience. Once, when tired and heated by the dance, she had gone to the parlor window that opened on the garden and seen a pallid, wistful

face looking at her from the gloom, and always after that she felt it to be there, whether she saw it or not. Drawn by an irresistible fascination, she would leave the dance and scan the shadowy recesses of the garden for the face whose settled sadness filled her with a strange tumult, an agony of self-reproach. Alone in her room, when the sound of the fiddle and the rattle of chips had ceased, in the moonlit silence of that retreat, full of the odorous breath of the garden, she hugged the secret that was her supremest joy and bitterest humiliation. Her father's obligation to Bev was the cable of unyielding fibre that held her to her promise; but had there been no obligation and no promise, Karl were equally remote. She could not surrender herself to a man whom the world, her world, held in contempt. She could

not bear the thought of being handed down in the tradition of the neighborhood as that handsome girl of Ransome's who married a Dutch gardener. No one else would ever see in him what she had seen. To all the world he was a Dutch gardener, and nothing more; and the world would remember him always as her father's servant. And she—she could never forget that on one occasion but for her interference he would have blacked her father's shoes. But she loved him; and all the arbitrary distinctions, the petty conventions, in Christendom could not abate one pang of the fierce, impatient yearning with which her heart went out to him in the deep silence of the night. He suffered without the dismal consolation of knowing that she suffered with him. This was the bitterest pang of all—that, out of the over-

flowing abundance of her heart, she dare not throw him a drop of comfort. To a woman as finely organized as she, and trained, as she had been, to the strictest code in matters of the heart, her false attitude towards Bev was a constant pain. How Bev would scorn her if he knew the truth! A cold shudder passed over her at the thought of her father. The agony of the knowledge that she was at heart a traitor to her father, to his honor, to his rigid ideas of class, to everything she had been taught to reverence, was unbearable. She loved her father with a love highly seasoned with admiration and with just that touch of awe that made it ideally filial; and the possibility of his ever looking upon her with other emotions than those of love and pride pierced her with unutterable anguish. She had hoped she would be so

much occupied with her guests that she would have no time to think; but the current of her thought set so strongly inward that the festivities which absorbed them were but a passing interruption to her. She could not conquer the feeling through which she suffered, but she could drape the ignoble yearning in the dignity of supreme renunciation; and she did that. She treated Karl with a lofty disdain, whose edge pierced them both at the same instant. During the day she revenged her own sufferings and humiliation upon him without mercy, in the manifold exquisite cruelties that only a woman and a refined nature can devise, and at night wept over him in passionate abandonment of remorse. She remembered with a thrill the splendid audacity of that "Ich sterbe für dich," the pathos of that "Liebchen." She heard it

yet, heard it always; through the breezy chatter of the crowd, and in the stillness of the night when they slept; and meanwhile the waning summer was bearing her on into the blazing heart of autumn, toward the marriage she knew to be as unfair to Bev as it was distasteful to herself.

They were gone at last. The great house was empty again. Lydia was becoming accustomed to the dull pain that gnawed her, and there was not so much time to think of it, for the wedding was at hand, and in the rush of preparation everything else was obscured. The landscape had put on its autumn tints, the seed-pods in the garden were dry, and only a few late flowers lingered. Lydia had been very busy all day; she was tired and depressed, and, glad to escape for a moment from the innumerable questions of the servants, who

never seemed to know what to do with anything, came out on the east porch and sat down in the ample rocker that stood invitingly near. The air was still balmy, and it came to her laden with the odor of fennel and ambrosia. Karl, who had been putting some flowers away in the pit, finished his work as the sun went down, and, after putting on his coat, came toward the house. Lydia thought wearily that he was coming to ask what she wanted done the next day; and she was so tired of being asked what she wanted done. He came close up to the porch, but did not come in.

"I am going away in de morning," he said. "May I say good-bye to you?"

When he looked at her her face was so blank that he thought she had not heard him.

"Where are you goin'?" she asked presently.

"Back to my gountry—to Germany."

Certainly! why should he not go? The summer was over; they did not need a gardener any longer; she would never need him again. She saw that the departure was opportune, but she was stunned; for a moment she felt as if she had been struck on the head.

"Will you do me de honor to shake hands mit me?" he asked, with that appealing glance that never failed to melt her, though she might give no sign.

"When are you goin'?" she asked, as she held out her hand.

"In de morning before you will be up. Dat is vy I gome to say good-bye to-night." He held the hand while he answered her, then pressed his lips to it. "I wish you

may be happy," he said, at last, and his voice faltered a little on the last word. Then he put on his hat and went out at the gate.

After all that she had made him suffer through that miserable summer, he wished she might be happy, and he was gone. She had seen his face for the last time. Somehow, in the multitudinous chances she had considered in relation to him, his going away, the most probable of all, she had not thought of. It seemed now as if it could not be. What would life be like when she did not see him every day? The sad face, the faltering voice, wrung her heart; and the agony must find relief. She fled up-stairs to the room that had been the scene of so many bitter conflicts, locked the door, and, throwing herself face downward on the bed, let the storm sweep

over her. She did not go down to supper, but lay on the bed; and the tempest raged and swelled until it seemed that life itself would be extinguished in the stress.

It spent itself at last, and through the calm that followed there shone a gleam of triumph. The fight was over and she had won it. She looked back on that long, bitter summer with a sudden sense of awe, realizing for the first time how great the peril had been. She had not known how much she loved him till this moment; but he was going away in the morning—the last fiery ordeal was past. Next week she would be married, and her path hereafter, if not flowery, would at least be smooth. None but herself would ever know of her infidelity to Bev, and she would atone for it by every tender ministration that a secret penitence could suggest. As she

lay there she thought of the serenade Karl had sung the first time she saw him. She had so wanted to hear it again, but she could never bring herself to ask him to sing it. She felt as if she could ask him now. Why should she not? She was stronger now, strong with the assurance of victory, and it could make no difference except to soften the thorny memories of the darkest period of her life. A delicious glow passed over her at the thought of seeing him again. There were only three persons in the house—herself, her father, and Karl. Her father slept down-stairs in the front of the house; Karl was away at the end of the L; no one but her could hear him, and nobody would ever know. Why should she not have this small pleasure to temper the memories of that bitter summer? And might she not, now that all was over, say

something kindly that would mitigate the equally dismal remembrance that Karl must carry away? With the energy of sudden resolve, she rose. In going to the gardener's room she experienced no sense of impropriety or confusion: she did not know how long she had been lying there, did not have the least idea of the time of night; but a faint glow from the window at the end of the porch showed her that Karl's lamp was still burning and that he had not gone to bed.

Her hair had come down and was tumbling about her neck; she whipped it out and caught it back with a hairpin, took up the guitar, and skirted the shadowy porch to the room over the kitchen. The window was open and she could see Karl sitting in the middle of the room with his head bowed upon his hands. She tapped

♦

lightly on the pane. He looked up and saw her standing in the dim light with the guitar in her hand.

"Karl," she said, "I want you to sing me that song before you go—the one you sung me that day for your dinner."

He came forward and took the instrument. He saw she had been crying, but the experience of the summer had been so crushing, he was so subdued by her past behavior, that he did not dream the tears were for him.

"You are grieved for someding," he said, with touching sympathy.

He opened the door and gave her a chair, and, sitting near her on the sill of the window, began to sing the song with all the tenderness and pathos his own yearning and bitter disappointment could put into it. It brought back all the old tumult,

She saw now, when it was too late, that she had overestimated her strength. When he finished, she was sobbing; and in an instant he was kneeling by her chair, raising to her a face sad, searching, but shining with the tremulous glow of a hope just born.

"You weep. Liebchen, is it for me?"

She did not answer, but laid a hand gently on his head and looked at him, with all the pent yearning of her full heart, all the agony of that long, weary struggle, and all the pathos of defeat in her eyes. It was no use. At that moment it seemed that there was nothing else in the world but him. Everything else was remote, dim, and unreal.

He clasped her with a fierce, exultant joy.

"You love me in spite of dis?" he

asked, looking down at his coarse attire. "You love me in spite of dat I am your nigga?"

"In spite of all," she faltered.

It was out at last: the crest of victory sank in inglorious surrender. Her humiliation was his triumph.

He looked at her with a face radiant, shining with a beauty not of earth.

"Liebchen," he whispered, "it is divine."

"You vill come mit me to mein gountry?" he asked presently.

She laid a finger on his lip. "Don't," she said; "I can't bear it."

"I vill not be a vagabond in mein own gountry; we vill be very happy. Come mit me, Liebchen."

He would not be a vagabond in his own country. The information that would

have been worth much to her once was worth nothing now. She scarcely heard it.

"I can't do that," she said. "You must go, and I must stay here and do as I have promised; but I wanted to tell you that I know I have been very cruel, and that I am very sorry. It was hard for me, too, and I could not trust myself to be kind."

**Gift of The People of the United States
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To the Armed Forces and Merchant Marine**

IX.

It seemed but a moment she had been sitting there with his arms around her and his head upon her breast, but the east was red and the sun was almost up. Lydia rose wearily. The sense of defeat, that was more fatiguing than the struggle, clung to her. "It's time you were gone," she said. He took her hands in his and asked, with searching earnestness,

"If you love me, vy vill you not gome mit me?"

"I can't," she answered, too tired for explanation.

"Is it your fader?" he asked.

She nodded, and said good-bye, looking up at him with a tender glow on her face.

The hair streaming about her shoulders had caught the flame of sunrise like a torch. He stooped and touched it with his lips as reverently as he would have kissed the garment of a saint. As Lydia turned from the door her eye encountered the figure of Beverly Johnson standing in the garden below.

Beverly had driven to town with the Colonel the day before; it was eleven o'clock at night when they returned, and rather than go on to his own place, which was several miles down the road, he had stayed all night, as he frequently did on such occasions. It happened this morning that there was some urgent reason for his being at home early, and he did not wait for the Colonel's late breakfast, but came down as soon as it was light and ordered his horse. While waiting for the horse to

be brought round he walked up and down the porch in the cool, bracing air. In one of the garden-beds a belated rose was blooming. It was small and imperfect, but it was the color of those Lydia had worn that day she went to drive with him, and it conjured before him a vivid image of her as she looked that afternoon. He went out to get it, and as he stuck it in his buttonhole he glanced up at Lydia's window. There was no sign of anyone stirring inside, and he knew she was not an early riser. His eyes wandered idly along the upper porch until they reached Karl's room, and there were riveted by the spectacle of his affianced wife coming out of the gardener's room with dishevelled hair and white, tear-stained face. Their eyes met, and instantly Lydia realized all that the discovery involved—Bev's renuncia-

tion of her, her own disgrace, and Karl's death unless he could escape immediately.

If Bev did not kill him her father would. They would ask no questions : what Bev had seen would be enough. For a moment Beverly stood as one paralyzed, then turned and ran up the steps of the porch with ominous haste. Perhaps he did not know of the back stairway leading to the room, or forgot it in his hurry. He did not attempt to reach them by it, but knocked violently on the Colonel's door. Lydia heard the knock and knew there was no time to lose.

"Karl," she said, "you must fly for yuh life. Don't stop to take anything with you, an' don't try to get clear off. Go down the back stairs an' out by the garden. Maybe you can get to the creek before they catch you, an' you can hide there so

they can't find you. Wait in the place where we used to go for ferns, an' as soon as it's safe I'll send yuh things by Schneider."

She spoke hurriedly, and pushed him toward the stairway, but Karl seemed in no haste to go.

"Vat vill dey do mit you?" he asked.

"I don't know, but it makes no difference: don't stop to think o' that."

"I dink of notting else," said Karl. "I vill not leave you; ve vill go togedder."

"For God's sake, don't waste a minute!" she said, in an agony of entreaty. "We can't both get away now. If you escape I may come to you, but if you stay here they will kill you."

They were coming up the back stairway; they were almost at the top, and Karl had not moved. "You vill gome to me?"

he asked again, and added doggedly, "I vill not stir mitoud your promise."

"Yes, yes, I'll come," she answered, dropping limply into a chair.

Karl sprang from the room as the two men entered it, and Lydia, pale and motionless, sat unconscious of their presence, while they rushed past her with only one thought—to lay hold of Karl. There was no way for him to get down-stairs from that side of the house, and they supposed he had run along the porch in the attempt to escape through the main building. While they searched the house, Karl, who had swung himself off the porch by the grape-vine at the end of it, was making his way to the vineyard, screened by the numerous outhouses that dotted the back yard. Through the thick foliage of the vineyard he ran unobserved to the creek,

Here, for a time at least, he was safe. He knew where there was a cavern in the rock large enough for a man to hide in. He had seen it that day when he swung over the cliff to get the flowers for Lydia. He ran along the edge of the creek until he came opposite the place, waded across, and climbed up by the help of the brush that grew along the side of the rock. The mouth of the cavern was covered with a mat of Virginia creeper, green when he last saw it, now burning red. He pushed aside the vine and crept in. The rock bottom of the cavern was covered with a deposit of leaves and mould that was soft and warm. He stretched himself out upon it and drew the mat of creeper over the opening. He had not slept for twenty-four hours; he was fatigued with his long run, and wet from his dip in the creek, and he

hungered with the keen hunger that comes of exercise and faultless digestion; he was an exile, and he was being hunted to the death; but he was young and he was in love. He heard the barking of dogs and the clatter of hoofs, and knew they were looking for him. He could even hear the snapping of twigs as they passed along the bluff close to his hiding-place; but he saw only Lydia as she stood by him in the dawn, with the tender glow on her face and the flame of sunrise on her hair. He turned on his bed of leaves and slept like a god.

There was no one in the house that day but Lydia. She knew that her father and Bev were looking for Karl, and that they would not stop till they found him. She knew what they would do

when they had found him, and that it was not Karl's fault, but hers. In one thoughtless moment she had brought about this terrible state of affairs, in the disgrace of which Bev and her father shared equally with her, though the danger was Karl's. Why could she not have let him go in peace? What gall and wormwood it must be to Bev to discover such a rival! She knew he loved her. To have lost her would have been pain enough without this bitter humiliation. She could not think of her father. The thought uppermost was to get away anywhere so that she might never look into his face again. She could think of nothing more terrible than meeting him. In the old proud, defiant days she had shrunk from the disgrace of being the wife of her father's servant: how infi-

nitely worse was this! It was not as bad as they thought, but it was bad enough; and they would never know just how it was. They would never know of that long, weary struggle and the victory, which, though dimmed by the confession of her love for Karl, would still have been a victory but for Bev's untimely appearance. Why had she gone out there? she asked herself in an agony of self-reproach. There had been no thought of shame or fear in her mind when she went. It did not seem wrong to go. It did not seem wrong to be there as long as no one knew it but themselves. Nothing she had done was really wrong: it was simply Bev's construction of the situation that made it terrible. It seemed to her that by the mere discovery the aspect of the whole affair was changed:

an act harmless in itself had become heinous by being witnessed. She even thought differently of it herself now. She looked at it with the eyes of those who would judge her, and she could find for it no shadow of excuse. Karl had said he was not a vagabond in his own country, and she felt it to be true; but her father would not be so easily convinced; let Karl be what he might, her trespass was equally unpardonable in their eyes. She seemed to have no feeling left. Even the love that had been tugging at her heart with such maddening persistence all these months was crushed and voiceless. When she thought of meeting Karl again, it was only as a means of saving him from death, and escaping herself from the possibility of again meeting her father. There was not

the faintest thrill of pleasure in the anticipation. Her duty was to Karl, because it was her fault that he was being hunted to the death. Perhaps she might find in that far country an asylum from Bev's scorn, her father's outraged honor, and her own shame. This was her brightest hope.

In assisting him to escape she must have help. She knew she could not depend on any of the negroes. The only chance of escape turned upon Schneider, and she was by no means sure of him. At noon, when he came to dinner, she sent for him to come to the house.

"Schneider," she asked, dubiously, "can I trust you to do something for Karl?"

A gleam of animation passed over the habitually stolid face.

"Yah, yah, you can," he answered.

"Where are 'Laric an' Black Fanny?"

"Over in de pasture by de creek."

"Well, some time this evenin' I want you to put black Fanny in the stable where I can get her, an' to-night, after they have all gone to bed, put a saddle on 'Laric an' lead him up the creek to that high bluff in Major Garland's fiel'. You'll fin' Karl there. Leave the hawse with him, an' tell him I'll meet him an hour befoah day at the top of the cliff where we use' to hitch the pha'ton. Don' let anybody see you goin', an' remember his life depen's on your gettin' there in time."

Her plan was to gallop across the country to some small station, where there would be little probability of herself or the horses being recognized, and there take the train. It would be necessary to ride a considerable distance, but the country was as

familiar to her as a well-thumbed map, and if they could get an hour's start on Alaric and Black Fanny they were safe. She did not attempt to encumber her flight with any thing in the shape of baggage. She took what money was in her purse, and some jewels she thought might prove useful, and alone in her room awaited the hour of flight.

The Colonel and Bev came in that night from a fruitless chase. They turned the horses out, but did not go to bed. They had made diligent search wherever they thought it possible for a man to conceal himself in a country so open. They had questioned everybody they met, but nobody had seen Karl. They were now convinced that he was concealed somewhere about the house, and they did not doubt that he would make an attempt to escape

that night. With an indifference to fatigue, inspired by a burning desire for vengeance, Beverly watched the front of the house all night, gun in hand, while the Colonel, similarly equipped, guarded the rear. They were so well prepared for Karl that he could not possibly have escaped; but they were wholly unprepared for what did happen. It was in that dim hour between day and night that Beverly saw a slender, darkly-habited figure steal out of the house and creep stealthily across the lawn in the direction of the stable lot. He could not fire upon it, and he could not molest it, because he was sure it was on its way to Karl, and it was Karl he wanted. His only chance was to follow it, but he had no horse. If he went for the horse, he would miss the direction, which he could only get by keeping an eye on Lydia. If

he attempted to call the Colonel, she would know that she was discovered and would mislead him. Several minutes were wasted in an agony of indecision, and then he fired the gun into the air. The shot was answered by a yelping chorus of dogs. It brought the Colonel to the spot instantly, but it also informed Lydia that she had been seen. She remembered that the horses had been turned into the pasture adjoining the lawn, and that Bev's horse was very hard to catch. She knew that if she could once get started, nothing else could overtake them, and she resolved to risk it.

As the Colonel came round the corner of the house, she sprang over the rock fence that inclosed the stable lot. They could not see her for the darkness, but they could hear the horse's hoofs thumping the

ground as she bounded along the avenue at her utmost speed.

"It's her," said Bev. "She's gone to him, and now we'll find him."

There was a sharp clatter of hoofs as she crossed the pike, and they fell again with a muffled beat as she rode into the lane.

"She's gone down the dirt road," said Bev. "He mus' be somewhere about the creek."

Lydia had counted correctly upon the difficulty of catching the horses. With the greatest haste, it was fifteen minutes before the Colonel was mounted, and then he was compelled to go on without Bev, who was still vainly endeavoring to beguile his wary horse into the bridle. But when she reached the bluff where Karl was waiting for her, she found that it was later than

she thought when she started. It was already light enough for her to see the forms of Karl and the horse he was holding by the bridle rudely blocked against the sky. She did not ride into the field, but beckoned him to come on. It was with infinite relief she saw him mount from the ground with a splendid spring, and take the fence instead of waiting to open the gate. Because he played the piano and did not care to be a soldier, she was accustomed to regarding him as destitute of manly accomplishments, and all day she had been haunted by the fear that he would not be able to manage Alaric, a horse that required a firm hand and a steady seat. He could ride, and she felt encouraged for the race that was to tax both themselves and the horses to the utmost. As he rode up to her and drew rein,

she tapped Black Fanny with the whip and said, "Come on, they are aftah us."

The winding creek hemmed them on all sides but one. The lane led up to Major Garland's house, and had no outlet but the one through which she had entered it. They were compelled to come back to the pike, and much of the advantage of the start was thus lost. Lydia felt that their only hope lay in the delay in catching the horses, and even this was a desperate one. They flew along the mile of lane and dashed into the pike abreast. The horses were splendidly matched in speed, and as they ran like the wind along the level stretch of pike in the tingling air of early morning, Lydia forgot the disgrace of her flight and the desperate chances of the chase; forgot she was running away with her father's servant, and that, for one of

them at least, death was imminent ;—forgot everything in the exhilarating impetus of their tremendous pace but the fact that Karl rode at her side like one to the manner born. They had been on the pike five minutes when Lydia, looking behind, saw a single horseman far behind them dimly sketched upon the paling sky. At first she could not tell which it was ; but as it grew gradually lighter she recognized her father by the color of his horse and his pose in the saddle. Her surprise was equal to her relief, in discovering that it was her father and that he was alone. She could not understand why Bev had not come with him. If he could not get his own horse, she thought he would have taken something else. His behavior was inexplicable, but through it they were saved. Her father could not overtake them ; it was not

worth while to press the horses; all that was necessary was to keep at a safe distance from him until the gray mare gave out, and keep steadily on in the direction they had first taken. By the time they reached the point she had in her mind they would have left him far behind, even if he did not give up the chase when he saw that it was hopeless. She drew rein and ran at an easier gait, measuring her pace with the accuracy of a thorough knowledge of the horses and what they had to accomplish.

It was with many a deep imprecation that Colonel Ransome recognized the two best horses on his place and divined the plan of the fugitives as he saw them slacken speed. The audacity of it filled him with tempestuous wrath. He saw that pursuit was futile, but he rode on, profane

ejaculations alternating with the prayer that Bev might come at last. It was some time before Lydia looked back again, and when she did, she saw far behind her father another horseman spurring toward them, and even at that distance and in that dim light she could recognize the magnificent stride of Bev's favorite hunter. Her heart sank; she leaned close to Karl and said, "Let him go; it's Bev, an' he's ridin' Selim."

They could easily beat her father, but they could not beat Bev. She knew they could not possibly reach the station she had in her mind before they would be overtaken. What chance was left? The stress of thought in the attempt to devise some other plan was as tremendous as their pace. It was getting lighter every moment, and presently she saw a long

black line of smoke trailing across the horizon behind them; it was the train from Lexington and it was coming toward them; in twenty minutes it would be at Spring Station, where it would make but a moment's stop. If they could reach there at the precise moment, they were safe. Before Bev could reach the station and take any measures to stop them, they would have arrived at the next, where they could leave the train and thus throw them off the scent. The plan shaped itself with the rapidity of desperation. A mile distant across some fields there was a pike that led directly to the station.

"This way," she called to Karl, as she wheeled and dashed over the rock fence into a stubble field. Karl followed, and on they went over fences, ditches, ravines, all fear extinguished in the excitement of

the race. Each time she looked back she could see that Bev, who was now in the lead, was steadily gaining on them; but every minute brought them nearer to the station. The engine was whistling at Payne's; a single whistle—it would not stop there; in three minutes it would be at Midway; in five more it would reach the station whose shingle roof they could already see above the trees; another field, and they would reach the pike. On the other side of the fence they were approaching was a deep depression that made it an ugly leap. They did not see it until it was too late to take the fence at another point. The horses went at it gallantly; Alaric made it with something to spare, but Fanny, missing it by a hair's breadth, slipped back into the ditch.

As Lydia clambered unhurt out of the

ravine, she saw Karl, who had ridden back, in the act of dismounting.

"Don't stop a minute," she called to him. "I am not hurt, but I can't go on: the mare has broken her leg. Take this—you'll need it," she said, offering him her purse and a pistol she had cautiously secured before starting. Karl took only the pistol.

"Get up mit me," he insisted.

"He can't make it with both of us," she answered; and then, remembering his previous obstinacy, added hurriedly, "Go on, go on; I'll come if you get away."

He sprang into the saddle. As they had ridden on she had told him of her plan, and now as he darted away she called after him, "Keep to the pike when you have crossed this fiel', an' turn to the right at the forks."

It was but an instant lost, but Bev had gained that much. For a moment she looked down at Fanny with a heart full of self-reproach. If she had only seen that place sooner. Then her eyes followed Karl, who had taken his last fence and was careering down the pike. He rode like a centaur, and he was certainly getting the utmost speed out of Alaric. Close behind her there was an ominous thunder of hoofs, and as she turned, Bev rose over the shoulder of the hill and spurred past her like the herald of doom. As he leaped the fence, his quick eye took in the horse in the ditch and her figure standing on the brink.

Lydia now climbed into a tree that stood near the fence, to get a better view of the road. Into the pike and on Bev went, and Lydia, standing on one limb, steadying herself by another, strained her

eyes upon the horseman who still led the chase. He was almost at the fork of the road—now he was there. A low cry broke from her. In his haste and confusion, or because he had not heard what she said, he had taken the wrong road. He could not escape now. Bev was gaining on him all the time. In a few minutes he would be near enough to pick a button off Karl's coat with the weapon she was sure he had, though she could not see it.

"I don't s'pose," she said, bitterly, "he could hit a flock o' barns with a pistol if he was standin' still."

Karl saw his mistake now and turned and fired, but his pursuer rode on untouched. Lydia saw the sweep of Bev's hand as he reached for the pistol in his hip pocket, a gesture eloquent of death.

She closed her eyes. There was a suc-

cession of sharp reports like the explosion of a bunch of fire-crackers, and then she did not hear even a hoof-beat. She opened her eyes with an effort. Bev was nowhere to be seen. A single horseman rode on into the fiery core of sunrise.

X.

COLONEL RANSOME had stopped in the last field on the hill, confident that Bev would overtake Karl in a few minutes. He rode on now as fast as he could. When he reached the point where Bev had disappeared, he found him kneeling on the ground by Selim with rage in his heart and imprecations on his lips.

"How did it happen?" he asked, for he knew him to be the best shot with a pistol in the country.

"The cap snapped," replied Bev, "an' befoah I could fiah again, he had hit the hawse, an' he fell. I shot as long as I had a load, but he was too far off. You better get a buggy an' take her home.

She's over there in the fiel' where Fanny fell. I'll get another hawse an' go on. He's got to stop somewhere, an' I owe him double now."

Beverly, mounted upon a fresh horse, continued the chase, but he saw nothing more of Karl. For a time he followed him by inquiries made along the road, but about noon he lost the trail and shortly after gave up the search. If he had not gone on in any of the roads which Beverly had followed, the latter was convinced that he must have doubled and gone back. The best chance now was to lie in wait for him near the Colonel's place, to which Bev believed he would sooner or later return.

The negroes were saying to each other, it "wuz same as if duh wuz a cawpse in de house." From the moment of their return

in the morning neither Lydia nor the Colonel had been seen. The Colonel's room on the ground floor was locked and the shutters were closed, and Meriky's knocks at Lydia's door had elicited no response. Breakfast was ready when they came home, but neither went near it; dinner had been served at noon as usual, but nobody dined; and now the third meal of the day waited untasted on the table.

"Sump'n pow'ful curyus wuz hatchin' when Mahs Wick furgit he meals."

In that dark room on the ground floor sat Colonel Ransome, bowed by the most crushing humiliation he could have conceived. To him it was supreme, immitigable: the bitterer because it was shared by Bev. There was no room in it for the sympathy and condolence of friends: complete isolation was the only salve. The

world, life, is worth just so much to any man as he sees in it, and for him the world had suddenly become uninhabitable; life was emptied of all that made it desirable. He sat astride a chair, with his arms crossed and his head bent upon the back. Hours had passed since his head had been lifted. He could not bear the light of day. The wrath that in the morning had stirred and sustained him had evaporated, leaving nothing but that abject terror of disgrace that could only be felt in all its intensity by a man as proud, as impatient of criticism, as haughtily resentful of contumely as he. Other women had fallen into this same pit, and he had not been astonished, had not been moved. It was the way of the world. It would be, so long as men were mortal and women weak. He had always regarded woman as the

weaker vessel, and, like other men of his mould, men in whom a barbaric vigor of temperament is veiled, not subdued, by the ethics of civilization, he had not held aloof from legitimate prey. He could have looked back upon many an intrigue that was not attributable to the inexperience and the riotous blood of youth. He was wont to reply to the soft impeachments of his friends with the laughing rejoinder that he was no "man of wood," "he wore no halo:" but it did not occur to him that Lydia, who was his daughter, could not be expected to pose successfully as a graven image of womanhood before the temptation to which he invariably yielded without a struggle, and with a fatuous pride in the surrender. Like other men, he reverberated the adulatory assumption that men are more merciful to women than women are to

each other, and he believed it. He had found it possible to bear himself with easy leniency toward the transgressions of women whose disgrace did not come home to him. He found no such excuses for the trespass against himself. The frailty of womankind, that opulence of nature which leads astray, was a thing with which he had many a time been merry over his glass. The follies, the small vanities of women, had been his amusement. The jest had been juiciest that showed them weakest, the story spiciest that attributed to them a vigor of temperament surpassing his own. But in discussing the sex he had done so always with the egregious assumption of superiority in those of his own household. Was a woman more or less than human because she had his blood in her veins? He did not stop to consider that. Other

women sinned and suffered. That was natural. Men were dishonored every day, and the world laughed unctuously behind their backs. That also was natural. But his daughter ! The thing was unthinkable, and it was true. Had she been the child of another he would have found in some part of a large and generous nature a drop of compassion. It was because she was his own that he had no mercy ; because she was so dear to him—had been his glory, his pride—was the fair flower of a love that was a hallowed remembrance—his own heart's blood—that he could find no extenuation. She had not only slain his pride, but she had brought into dishonor an unsullied name. And men would think of her, speak of her, as he had thought and spoken of other women similarly placed. It was part of his punish-

ment that the innumerable humiliations that Lydia in her ignorance could not know or dream of were present with him in all the miserable minutiae of disgrace. It was singular that the leniency of which he had boasted was more terrible to him now than the fiercest condemnation. He shrank from it as from torture.

He did not know of the strenuous fight bravely, silently carried on under his very eyes. Had he known of it he could not have imagined its stress. There was no point in his experience, no stratum of his nature, from which to compute the intensity, the peril, the sublime endurance of that struggle waged between two inextinguishable fires, the flame without and the flame within. As little could he measure the force of that imperious impulse, inherent in woman as in himself but the more

formidable to her because it comes to her first like a surprise in a crisis; lurks like a brooding tempest; its strength, its purpose, its very existence unknown to her until the supreme moment in which it sweeps up in full tide from some abysmal depth of her being in a storm through whose tumult the ordinary affairs of life show paltry and unreal.

Accustomed to seeing the primeval instinct of nature masquerading either as saint or devil, applauded as virtue or condemned as vice, he could not look upon it in its primitive nakedness as an essential impulse of that impersonal creative energy that is neither the one thing nor the other. This view, which, while it could not have drawn the iron from his soul, might have moved him to admiration for the victory so nearly won, compassion for the defeat that

was inevitable, was absent from his creed, beyond the grasp of his philosophy. Equally remote was the comprehensive charity of "Go, and sin no more." That might suffice for God and a better world, but it would not answer here. The keenest agony of all lay in the thought that she must drag her bruised and tarnished womanhood to the bitter end of life, shunned by the women, preyed upon by the men who had delighted in honoring her. Had he been a Catholic, the cloister might have screened her; but for the Protestant there was no such refuge. To commit her to the Roman Church was to commit her to the devil, according to his belief; and yet in some way she must be saved from that lingering shame in the extremity of which she might be driven to further sin. All day and far into the night

he sat with this fanged thought rioting upon him. In this sweat of anguish the amiable complaisance, this debonair tolerance, the superficial gallantry of the man of the world fell away like a gay garment cast in a fight, and the rugged fibre of the real man stood forth in nude supremacy of resolve, in a pagan simplicity of purpose, beside which the frail code that bound him was as gossamer, and the creed that claimed him dwindled infinitesimally.

At last he rose, felt in the top drawer of the bureau for something he knew was there, and put it in his pocket. He felt his way through the darkness to the stairway, mounted it, and stopped at his daughter's door. He walked heavily, and Lydia knew the step. When the expected knock came she got up and opened the door. She had been lying on the bed in her habit

just as she returned from the ride. There was no light in the room but that of the full October moon; but that was enough. Her father's face was white and haggard; the story of the last two days was carved upon it ineffaceably. It was of him she had been thinking all day. After Karl's escape she had not thought of him. She had not looked in her father's face as they drove silently home that morning, but she had felt all that he felt. She had never dreamed that anything in life or death, or in that grim reckoning she had been taught to expect after death, could be so full of poignant agony as that drive had been. Through the long day and night she had been thinking of him, and her heart came back to him with a strenuous rebound. She had always loved him with a devotion as rare as it was beautiful. It seemed to her

that she had never loved him as she did now, when she knew that he was bowed beneath the weight of a humiliation with which she alone had power to crush him. The sight of his face wrung her as nothing else, not even Karl's death, could have wrung her. She moved a chair toward him mechanically, but he did not notice it. He came close to her, but did not look at her, and their faces were spectral in the uncertain light.

"Lydia," he said, "when a girl has done what you have, there is only one other thing that can be done with decency. Your marriage with Bev can not come off now, and aftah this day's work we can't hope to keep the reason a secret. There is only one thing I can see to do," he went on, in a steady voice: "can you do it, or must I?"

He looked at her fixedly. She was so unmoved, so passive under his question, that he thought she had not understood it; but before he could repeat it she answered, "I will do it, father," in a voice as steady as his own.

He was not yet quite sure that she conceived him fully. He took something out of his pocket, laid it on the dressing-table, and turned toward the door.

"Father, you'll kiss me first?"

The tone was tremulous now and pleading.

Her father paused upon the threshold and half turned. He would have done it if he could. Had the lover been worthy of her, he might even have condoned the rest. But she had turned from the man who loved her worthily to debase her eyes upon a servant. He thought of Bev, the

son of his best friend, the man who had generously rescued him from ruin, whose head, like his own, was bowed in shame; thought of the ignoble lover she had sought to save at the expense of Bev's life, at the expense of his own, if need be; and he turned away. Even in the awful shadow of what was to come he could not pardon that. He went out and shut the door.

"How base I mus' be in his eyes," thought Lydia, "if he can turn from me like that, when he knows—"

She turned slowly and took up the thing he had laid on the table. It was a small bowie knife in a brass-mounted sheath. She had seen it many a time in her father's bureau drawer, and had heard it jokingly referred to as an "Arkansas toothpick." It was keen-pointed and bright. She felt the edge of it absently, laid it down, and

began to undress. There was no impulse, no desire of appeal from the sentence. It was her father's wish, and she accepted it as final. She would have been glad could he have known that she was less criminal than he thought her, but any attempt at extenuation would only make her appear less worthy of absolution in his eyes. It was hard to go unpitied, unforgiven; but he should see that she did not falter. Perhaps in this act of expiation she might win back some small part of the love she had lost, of the pardon she craved. God knew what her father did not know, and perhaps God would be merciful.

The long night passed. A pale glimmer of dawn filtered through the green wooden shutters that darkened the Colonel's room, and he rose with a start, like one suddenly aroused from sleep. "Had she done it?"

He walked tottering'y out of the room and mounted the stairs slowly, heavily, as one who encounters an opposing force, and stopped before Lydia's door. The stillness of death brooded inside. He turned the knob and went in. The window was open, and the freshening breeze of morning parted the white curtains and came in saturated with the odor of fennel and ambrosia. On the snowy bed near the window, her head slightly sunken in the soft pillow, lay his child, white and still as a parian bas-relief, the kiss of eternal peace upon her face.

He drew nearer and looked at her steadily. Beside her lay the knife, a single drop of blood on its point. He turned back the sheet. There was a dark red stain on her left arm, and beneath it some sheets had been folded thickly to ab-

sorb the ebbing current of life. He noted this and other signs of deliberate preparation with pained wonder. Her sustained courage awed him. He would have done it as fearlessly, but he must have done it more quickly. Her readiness to die appealed, as nothing else could, to that recklessness of life that was the foundation of his own courage. She shared with him the contempt of mere breath when all of life but breath had been eliminated. It was the ring of the true metal, and the old pride that lay with its head in the dust leaped up and gloried in the fearless, unquestioning atonement. The act knit him to her with strenuous sympathy; it illumined for him the life of which he had known little, though its still waters flowed so near him. He choked now. His massive chest heaved, and his eyes brimmed

.

over as he looked down at the face, fair and fresh as it had been in the gladdest day of her unsullied girlhood. She was his daughter after all; to the last drop of blood in her veins she was his own. She had not quailed at the sentence, she had not faltered in the execution: there was no fear in her. He knew she had been proud as he; she had shared his prejudices as she had shared his courage. Thus equipped, he could well believe she had not yielded tamely. She must have suffered. Such pride, such courage could have yielded to nothing less than the imperious passion that was one of the basic elements of his own nature. In the presence of that supreme expiation he could even look admiringly on the impetuous laring of the love that had wrecked her. Karl had said it was divine. To her

father in this new light it was splendidly human in its audacity and completeness. He could understand it because it was a part of him. He could now remember with patience that the gardener had a handsome face and gentle ways. He had noticed that himself. And whatever else he may have been, he was a man and young, and Lydia was beautiful. The marble majesty of death was eloquent for her who could not speak for herself. In the silence and dim dusk of that chamber some things that had been hidden were revealed. It was but a glimmer, but it was enough. He loved her dead as he had never loved her living; he forgave her all. The kiss of reconciliation denied to the warm, pleading mouth was passionately pressed on the lips that could not answer it.

"Brave girl! brave girl!" he murmured, chokingly.

In a vase on the table were some flowers she had placed there a few days before. They seemed a part of her. He raised them to his lips and laid them on her breast. As he turned away from the bed, the face that looked at him out of the mirror over the dressing-table was old, old; and the iron-gray locks that yesterday set off his handsome head were white.

In the crisp, cool air of an October morning two men stood talking at the avenue gate. They were Karl and Schneider, and they spoke in German and spoke softly. Presently Schneider turned back to the house. Karl lingered a moment at the gate. "It was divine," he murmured, "but it is over." The future

dwindled miserably before him ; his heart was heavy and his eyes were dim ; but through the ache of withholden bliss there ran a flash of exultation—the other could not have her.

He walked on slowly until he came to the point in the road from which he had caught the first glimpse of the house on that April afternoon. A white rime lay on the fences and the fields that then were green ; the locust trees then full of bloom were bare of leaves, and where he had gathered violets the golden-rod hung out its yellow tassels, and the dusky red berries and brilliant foliage of the sumach burned above them. He turned and looked across "God's Country." The maple grove upon the hill blazed red and yellow against the pale autumn sky ; in the midst of it the Colonel's house, square and massive, rose

like an altar wrapped in flame, and above it the soft, dull haze of Indian summer floated like the smoke of sacrifice.

He heard but did not heed the clatter of hoofs on the pike behind him, till a pistol-shot rang out sharp and clear in the frosty air. Then he turned and saw Beverly Johnson riding toward him, pistol in hand. He took from his pocket the one Lydia had given him, snapped it several times to show that it was unloaded, and threw it from him. He made no attempt to get away, no bid for quarter save the display of his empty weapon. He stood leaning carelessly against the bole of a tree by the roadside, and no muscle or line of his face changed as Beverly rode up to him with his finger on the trigger. The absolute fearlessness of pose and bearing would under other circumstances have appealed

strongly to Beverly's admiration. But what would have been a splendid display of courage in a man who was his equal, in a servant was exasperating impertinence. He would have scorned to take such an advantage of a gentleman, but Karl had no rights. Moreover, he had loved successfully the woman of his choice, he had dishonored him, and he had killed his horse. That fierce greed of absolute possession that colors the love of every man, and proclaims his kinship with the Turk, had been crossed. Beverly fired with as little compunction as he would have fired on a thief, and Karl fell back among the dry leaves and grass on the roadside, pierced by two bullets that had struck him scarcely an inch apart.

Beverly's face, dark and threatening, bent over him; a spasm of pain crossed

that of the dying man; then he looked up at his slayer and said, with a smile that cheated vengeance of its triumph,

"I will see her—to-day."

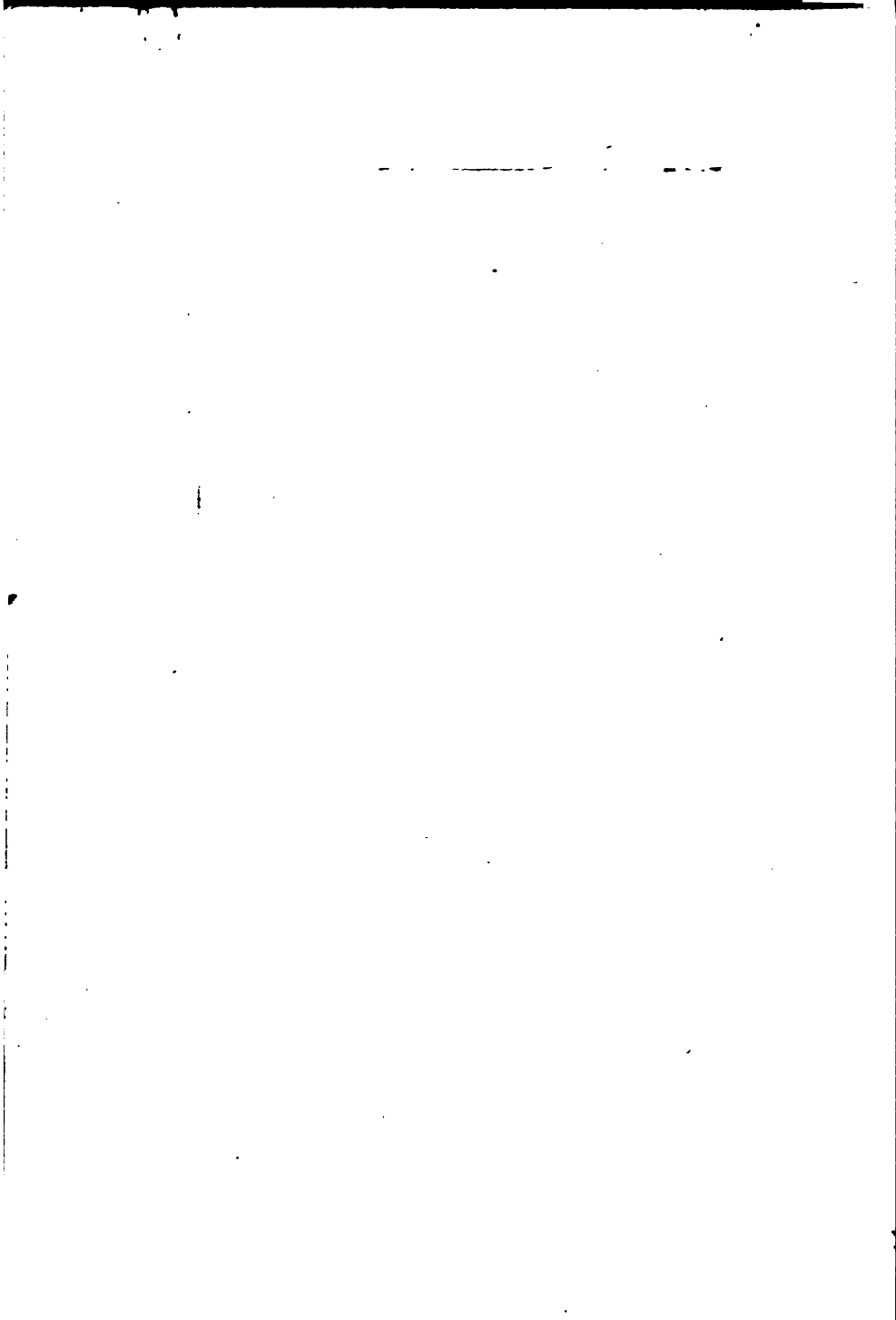
He closed his eyes, and, with a long respiration that was like a sigh of relief, his life went out.

* * * * *

"Killed in Kentucky" was the headline under which the *New York Sun* a few days later announced the death of Karl and gave some particulars concerning him until then unknown. "He was," the despatch stated, "the son of Prince Frederick of S——, the young Count Alfred, who had been in America for a year, during which time his father had been ignorant of his whereabouts. He had run away from the Bonn University, where he was studying, because his father wanted

to force him into a marriage that was distasteful to him, and had, when discovered, refused to return unless the proposed marriage were declared off. The Prince finally relented, and his son was on the point of leaving the country when killed. When discovered he was working as a common laborer on a farm in Kentucky, and was recognized by a man named Schneider, who had served in the same regiment of hussars in Germany."

THE END.



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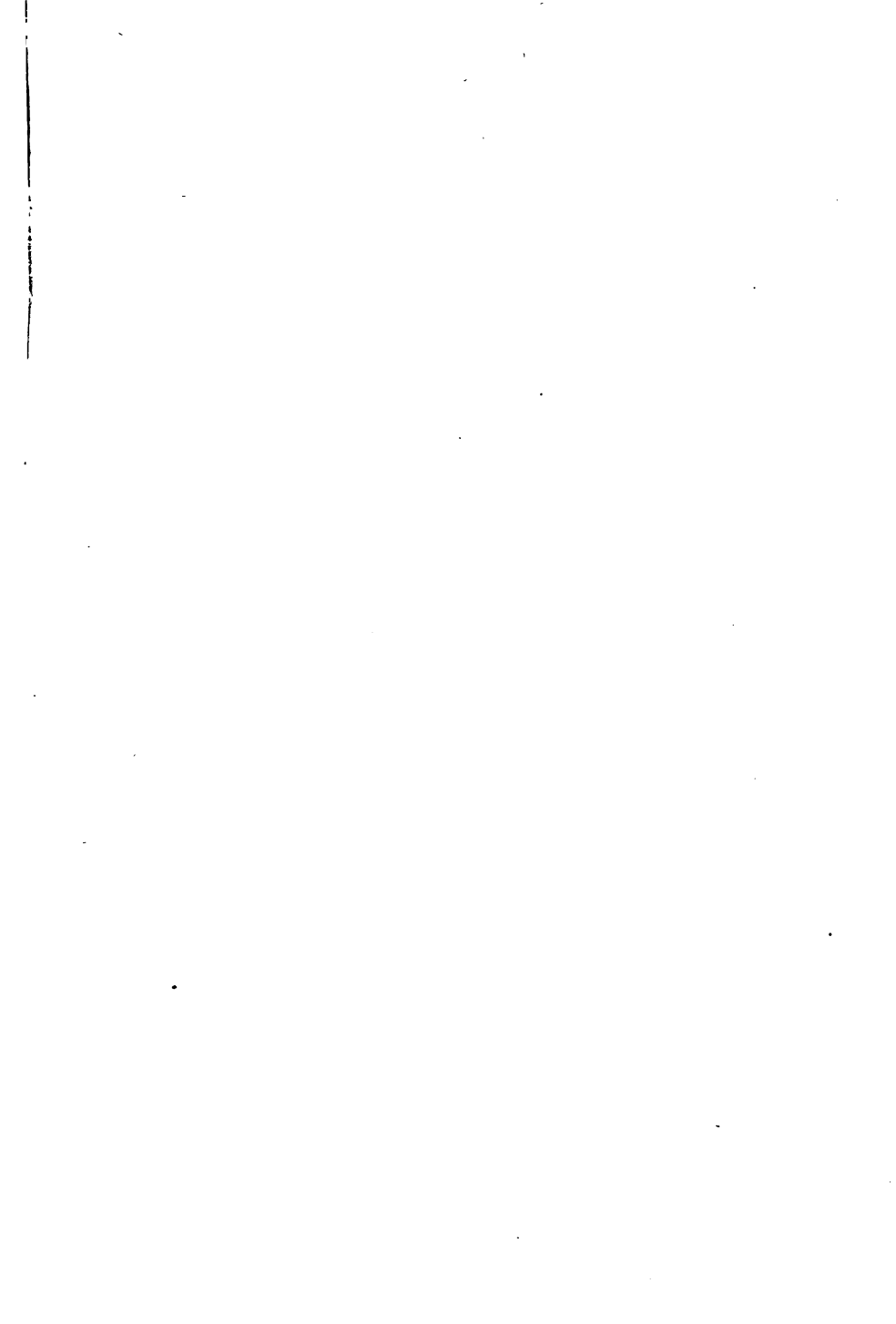
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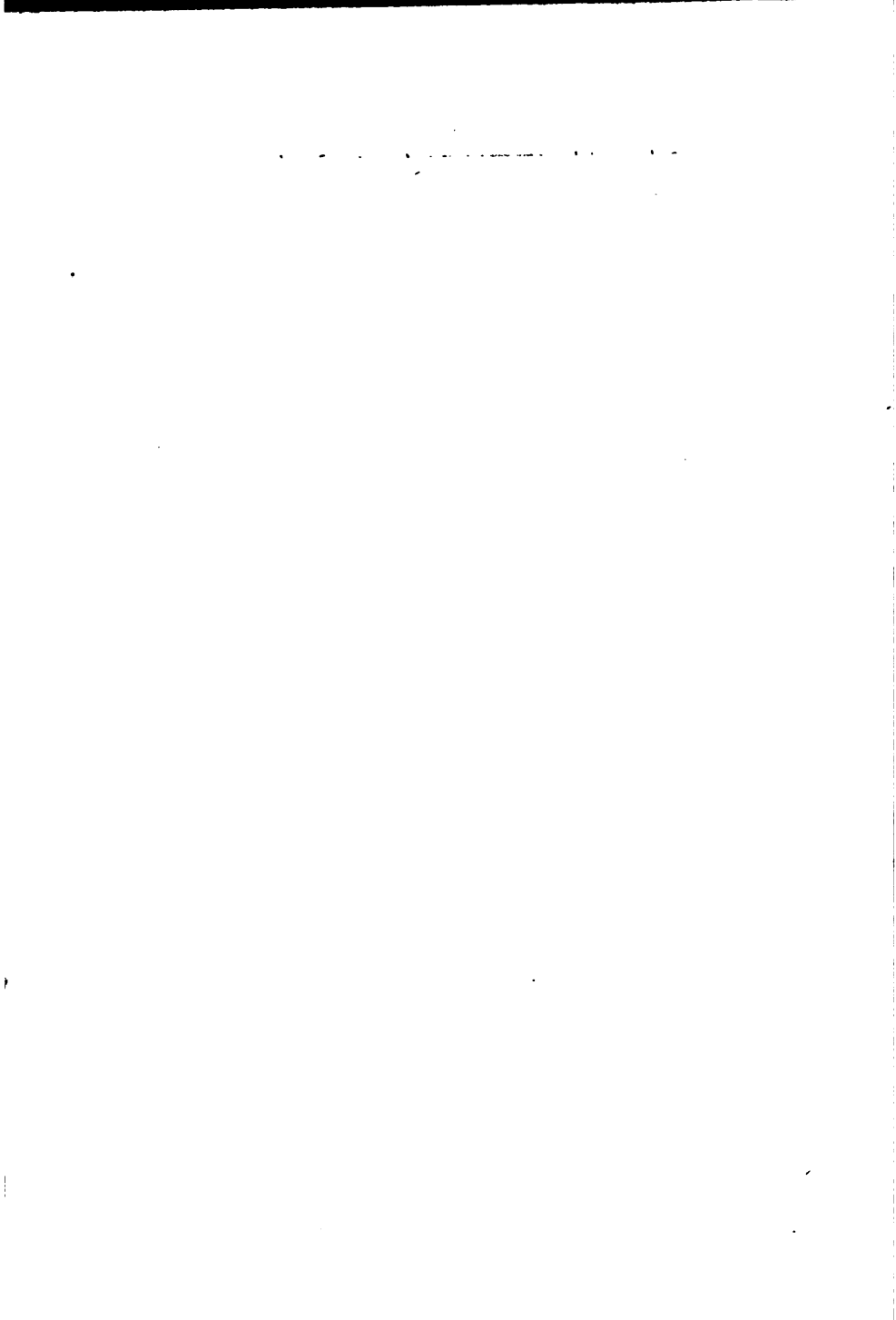
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